

Species Status Assessment

Common Name: Thaxter's Sallow

Date: 3/03/2025

Scientific Name: *Psaphida thaxterianus*

By: Hollie Shaw

Class: Insecta

Family: Noctuidae

Species Synopsis (*a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York*):

Psaphida thaxterianus is found from Massachusetts through New York and south to South Carolina; west to Wisconsin and Oklahoma. The northern limits are in Ontario, Canada (Lotts and Naberhaus 2025, iNaturalist 2025). In New York, most observations are from Long Island. There are also reports from Ulster (1) and Cattaraugus (1) counties (iNaturalist 2025).

Trends are unknown. *P. thaxterianus* is considered a species of concern in several states in the eastern portion of its range (VanDyk 2025). Recent observations range from 2003 to 2024 (iNaturalist 2025).

This species is typically found in shrubby oak-dominated habitats, often with acid soil. Some habitats include dry open woodlands, barrens, ridge tops, and sometimes clearcuts. Oaks (*Quercus* spp.) have been reported as the only known food plants (Wagner et al. 2011). Specific habitats are not currently known in New York.

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

i. **Federal:** not protected **Candidate:** no

ii. **New York:** not protected; SGCN

b. Natural Heritage Program

i. **Global:** G4

ii. **New York:** S1 **Tracked by NYNHP?:** Yes

Other Ranks:

-IUCN Red List:

-Northeast Regional SGCN:

Status Discussion:

This species was considered historical (SH) in New York until recently (2003) when *P. thaxterianus* was found on Long Island. The New York State rank was changed from SH to S1 (New York Natural Heritage Program 2025).

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status	SGCN?
North America	Yes	-	-			-
Northeastern US	Yes	-	-			-
New York	Yes	Unknown	Unknown			Yes
Connecticut	No	-	-			-
Massachusetts	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	1874-2022 (Mass Moths 2025)		-
New Jersey	No	-	-			-
Pennsylvania	Yes	-	-			No
Vermont	No	-	-			-
Ontario	Yes	-	-			-
Quebec	No	-	-			-

Column options

Present?: Yes; No; Unknown; No data; (blank) or Choose an Item

Abundance and Distribution: Declining; Increasing; Stable; Unknown; Extirpated; N/A; (blank) or Choose an item

SGCN?: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Monitoring in New York (*specify any monitoring activities or regular surveys that are conducted in New York*):

There are no known monitoring activities or regular surveys other than occasional lepidopteran surveys by New York Natural Heritage Program.

Trends Discussion (*insert map of North American/regional distribution and status*):

Trends are unknown. *P. thaxterianus* is considered uncommon in several states in the eastern portion of its range (Wagner et al. 2011). Recent observations range from 2003 to 2024 (iNaturalist 2025).

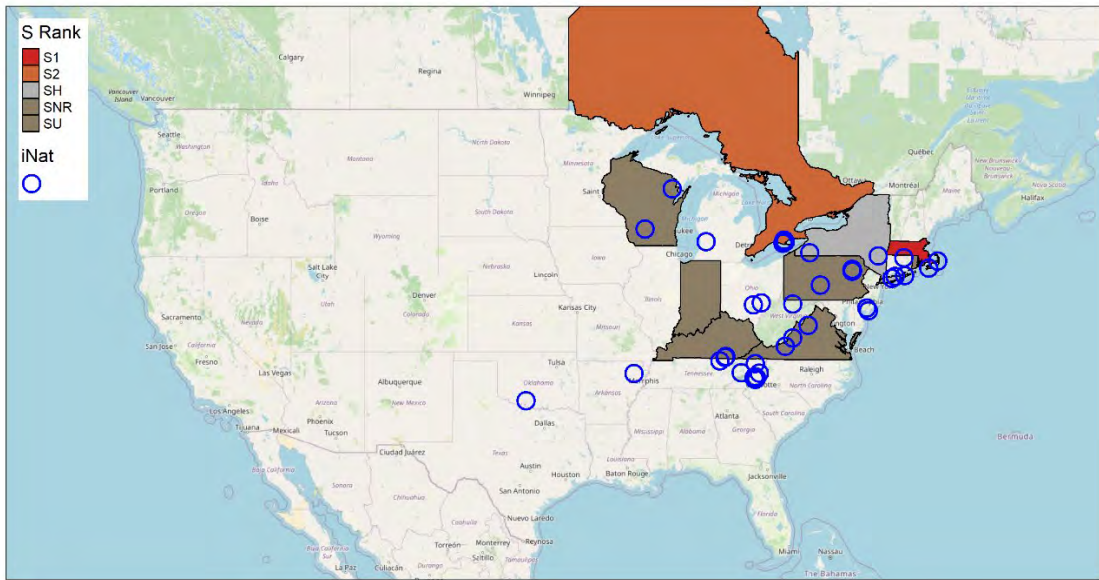


Figure 1. *Psaphida thaxterianus* distribution status in North America (iNaturalist 2025, NatureServe 2025).

III. New York Rarity (*provide map, numbers, and percent of state occupied*)

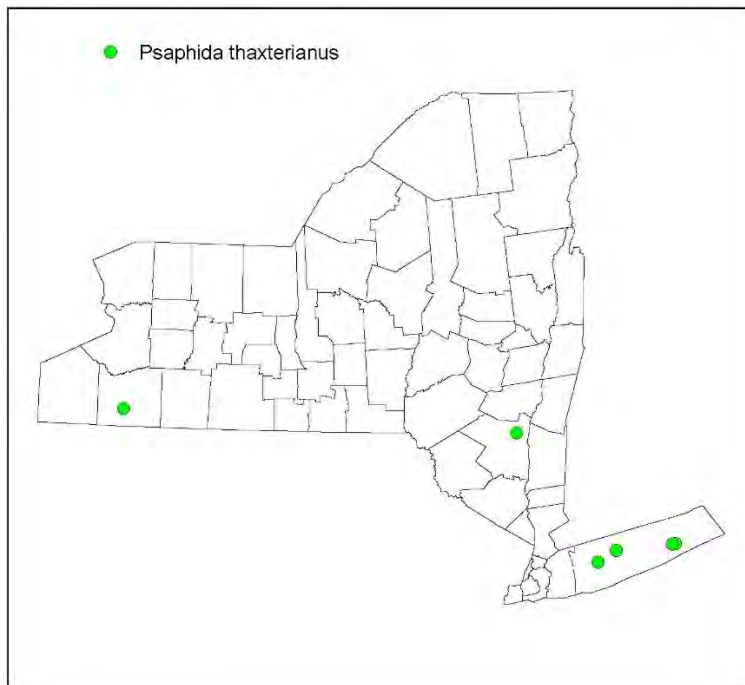


Figure 2. Records of *Psaphida thaxterianus* in New York (iNaturalist 2025).

Years	# of Records	# of Counties	% of State
Pre-2000	unknown	_____	_____
2000- 2023	7	3	<1

Table 1. Records of *Psaphida thaxterianus* in New York.

Details of historic and current occurrence:

Historical data (e.g., museum specimens) have not been reviewed. New York Natural Heritage Program (2025) considered this species to be historically known in the state until recently. Most observations are from Long Island (Suffolk County). There are two additional observations from Ulster and Cattaraugus counties (iNaturalist 2025).

New York’s Contribution to Species North American Range:

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%	Peripheral	

Column options

Percent of North American Range in NY: 100% (endemic); 76-99%; 51-75%; 26-50%; 1-25%; 0%; Choose an item

Classification of NY Range: Core; Peripheral; Disjunct; (blank) or Choose an item

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type (from NY crosswalk of NE Aquatic, Marine, or Terrestrial Habitat Classification Systems):

- a.
- b.

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York

Habitat Specialist?	Indicator Species?	Pollinator Species?	Habitat/Community Trend	Time frame of Decline/Increase
No	No	No	Unknown	

Column options

Habitat Specialist, Indicator Species and Pollinator Species: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Habitat/Community Trend: Declining; Stable; Increasing; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Habitat Discussion:

This species is typically found in shrubby oak-dominated habitats, often with acid soil. Some habitats include dry open woodlands, barrens, ridge tops, and sometimes clearcuts. Oaks (*Quercus* spp.) have been reported as the only known food plants (Wagner et al. 2011). Specific habitats are not currently known in New York.

V. Species Demographic, and Life History:

Breeder in NY?	Non-breeder in NY?	Migratory Only?	Summer Resident?	Winter Resident?	Anadromous/Catadromous?
Yes	-	No	Yes	Yes	-

Column options

First 5 fields: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Anadromous/Catadromous: Anadromous; Catadromous; (blank) or Choose an item

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion (*include information about species life span, reproductive longevity, reproductive capacity, age to maturity, and ability to disperse and colonize*):

Adults are found in the early spring with mid-April typically being the end of the flight season, even to the north. Larvae mature in late spring. They are rarely encountered at this stage because they tie clusters of leaves together to form a shelter (Wagner et al. 2011).

VI. Threats (*from NY 2015 SWAP or newly described*):

Little is known about the needs of this species. Based on the timing of active larva and oaks being the known food plant, it's possible spongy moth management may be a threat. If this species occurs in pine barrens habitats, fire management may impact the population. In addition, occupied habitat near artificial lighting may also have an impact.

Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Spatial Extent	Severity	Immediacy	Trend	Certainty
7. Natural System Modifications	7.1 Fire & Fire Suppression	-	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.3 Agricultural & Forestry Effluents	9.3.3 Herbicides & pesticides (spongy moth control)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.6 Excess Energy	9.6.1 Light pollution	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Table 2. Threats to *Psaphida thaxterianus*

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes: _____ No: _____ Unknown: ✓

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

The best management strategy for this species is the management of the natural community, or habitat, where this species occurs. If populations occur in pine barrens habitats, maintaining the full suite of plant and animal species requires frequent (every few decades) disturbance to maintain open-canopy, shrub-dominated communities and to prevent succession to a closed-canopy hardwood forest (Jordan et al. 2003). Researchers have determined that "an active fire management program utilizing prescribed fire with appropriate mechanical treatments" is the preferred method (Jordan et al. 2003). Researchers have also determined that the size, type, intensity, and timing of fires (pyrodiversity) needs to be evaluated for each site to maximize benefits to the natural community and the species it supports (Jordan et al. 2003). The entire occupied habitat for a population should not be burned in a single year. For example, in places where prescribed burning is used, refugia (unburned areas) are needed for many species to ensure that any life stage can survive a fire.

In addition, minimizing lighting to maintain dark sky conditions would be beneficial. When lighting is necessary, it's best to use lights that emit red or yellow light because insects are generally not attracted to those colors. However, many sodium lights, which emit yellow light, are so bright that they do attract some insects. The best lighting appears to be low pressure sodium lights which have little effect on flying insects (Schweitzer et al. 2018).

Insecticide use should be avoided when possible if rare species are present. When insecticide use cannot be avoided, careful planning along with consistent rare species monitoring, can result in successful eradication of the target species without eliminating rare species. Attempt to control spongy moth populations to avoid extreme oak defoliation. A biocontrol alternative is *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Btk) for some target species, such as spongy moths. Sensitivity varies between species, and it appears that most species are not sensitive to Btk approximately two weeks post-application. There are two other spongy moth biocontrols that appear to be very effective at eliminating or slowing the spread of spongy moths with little effect on non-target species: Gypchek (Reardon et al. 2016) and *Entomophaga maimaiga* (a fungus). *E. maimaiga* was introduced in 1910 and 1911 and was rediscovered in 1989 in the northeast it can be highly variable (Shelton 2025).

Action Category	Action	Description
A.1 Direct Habitat Management	A.1.0.0.0 Direct Habitat Management	Site Management

Action Category	Action	Description
A.2 Direct Species Management	A.2.0.0.0 Direct Species Management	Invasive/problematic species control
B.3 Outreach	B.3.0.0.0 Outreach	Awareness and Communications
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.0.0.0 Design and Plan Conservation	Site/Area Protection
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.0.0.0 Design and Plan Conservation	Resource/Habitat Protection
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.1.3 Develop a conservation, management, or restoration plan for protected private lands	Habitat & natural process restoration
C.7 Legislative and Regulatory Framework or Tools	C.7.0.0.0 Legislative and Regulatory Framework or Tools	Policies and Regulations
C.9 Education and Training	C.9.2.0.0 Training and individual skill development	

Table 2. Recommended conservation actions for *Psaphida thaxterianus*.

VII. References

- iNaturalist.org. 2025. *Psaphida thaxterianus* records in North America. California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, CA. <http://www.inaturalist.org>. Accessed February 19, 2025.
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- Reardon, Richard, John Podgwaite, and Roger Zerillo. 2016. GYPCHEK: bioinsecticide for gypsy moth control in forested ecosystems and urban communities. FHTET-2012-01, 2nd Edition March 2016. Morgantown, WV: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Health Technology Enterprise Team. 59 p.

Schweitzer, D.F., M.C. Minno, and D.L. Wagner. 2018. Rare, Declining, and Poorly Known Butterflies and Moths (Lepidoptera) of Forests and Woodlands in the Eastern United States. USFS Technology Transfer Bulletin, FHTET-2009-02.

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VanDyk, John, ed. 2025. *BugGuide.Net: Identification, Images, & Information For Insects, Spiders & Their Kin For the United States & Canada*. Iowa State University. Accessed February 13, 2025. <https://bugguide.net/>.

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Originally prepared by	
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