NAMES
Blera fallax

DESCRIPTION
The Pine hoverfly is currently only known at 2 sites in the UK, both in Strathspey. The species was first recorded by a Victorian collector in the 19th century and occasional records continued up until the 1940s. There was then a gap until the 1980s when a few individuals were found at a single stump and then after extensive searching the larvae were only rediscovered at sites in the 1990s.

Breeding takes place in decaying wood in pine. The larvae can emerge from the stumps after 1 year if conditions are good, but development can take over 2 years. The larvae leaves the decaying area to pupate on the edge of the stump or on nearby vegetation, where the transformation into its adult form takes place. A fresh stump can support suitable conditions for 8-10 years before it dries out, so a continual supply of stumps is required. There are now few areas of mature pine woodland in Scotland, so the Pine hoverfly is probably almost entirely reliant upon stumps cut for commercial forestry.

DISTRIBUTION MAP

THREATS
The main cause of decline appears to have been a lack of breeding habitat (pine stumps). This species is restricted to just two sites, making it vulnerable to changing conditions. Since population levels are so low there colonisation of new sites is currently unlikely

ACTION REQUIRED
- Agreements with landowners to avoid damage of existing stumps and to schedule a suitable programme of felling.
- Felling of mature conifers to create breeding sites
- Creation of artificial breeding sites, which can involve cutting holes in pine stumps and using plastic pots filled with wood chips and sawdust.
- Further research is needed to establish the best conditions for breeding success.

FURTHER READING
Scottish Natural Heritage Website: http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-action-framework/species-action-list/hoverfly/

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