Bogong Moth

Agrotis infusa, a night-flying traveller that steers by the stars

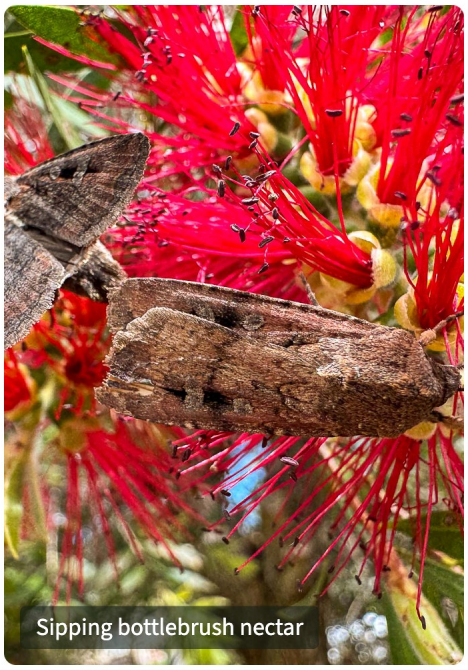
Endangered (IUCN Red List)

Not yet listed nationally



Look for two pale spots on each wing

Photos © Peter Rowland



Sipping bottlebrush nectar

SIZE
Wingspan 40 to 50 mm, about the length of your thumb

WINTER HOME
Inland plains, where the caterpillars grow

SUMMER HOME
Cool caves and rock crevices in the Australian Alps

WHY IT MATTERS
Food for the Mountain Pygmy-possum and other alpine animals

An amazing journey

Each spring, young moths fly up to about 1,000 km from the inland plains to the Australian Alps, to places they have never been. They rest all summer in cool caves, packed in by the thousands, without eating. In autumn they fly back to lay their eggs. Strong westerly winds sometimes blow them to the coast and into our towns.

The climate connection

Bogong Moths were once counted in their billions. Severe drought and hotter summer caves caused a crash of up to 99.5% between 2018 and 2021. In 2026, huge numbers were seen along the east coast, a hopeful sign, but scientists say the species still needs time and help to recover.

Reading the stars

In 2025, scientists showed that Bogong Moths use the night sky, including the Milky Way, as a compass. On cloudy nights they use Earth's magnetic field instead. They are the first insects proven to navigate by the stars.

Scan to watch Bogong Moths feeding

WONDER QUESTION

How does a moth find a mountain cave it has never seen?

Turn over for teacher notes

Teacher notes

Curriculum links (NSW syllabuses)

Stage	Outcome	Where the Bogong Moth fits
Early Stage 1	STE-SCI-01 (S&T K–6, 2024)	Living things have features: wings, antennae and six legs
Stage 1	ST1-SCI-01 (S&T K–6, 2024)	Life cycles and change: egg, caterpillar, pupa, moth
Stage 2	ST2-SCI-01 (S&T K–6, 2024)	Food chains: nectar to moth to Mountain Pygmy-possum and ravens
Stage 3	ST3-SCI-01 (S&T K–6, 2024)	Adaptations: migration, resting in caves and fat stores for summer
Stage 4	SC4-LIV-01 (Science 7–10, 2023)	Interactions: a keystone food source for alpine animals
Stage 5	SC5-ENV-01 (Science 7–10, 2023)	Effects of climate change: drought, hotter caves and population crashes
Stage 6	BI-12-03 (Biology 11–12, 2025)	Investigating navigation: the 2025 star compass experiments

In the classroom

K–2

Moth or butterfly?

Compare the photo of a Bogong Moth with a butterfly. Look at the antennae, the colours and how the wings are held. When is each one awake?

YEARS 3–6

Map the journey

On a map of south-eastern Australia, trace a moth's flight from the inland plains to the Alps and back. Measure the distance. What might help or stop it on the way?

YEARS 7–12

Test the star compass

Read how scientists turned the projected night sky around and the moths turned too (Dreyer et al. 2025). Design your own fair test of an animal's sense of direction.

Get outside

In spring, check flowering grevilleas, bottlebrushes and gums for feeding moths. Take a photo and log it with Zoos Victoria's Moth Tracker: every sighting helps scientists learn where the moths travel.

First Nations perspectives

The name comes from the Dhudhuroa word *bugung*. For thousands of years, Aboriginal peoples gathered in the high country to roast and share the moths. Through your local AECG or Land Council, invite knowledge holders to share their stories. *[Local story, added with permission]*

Hope and action

Scientists, First Nations communities and volunteers are working together to track the moths and fill the gaps in what we know. Small things students and families can do during the spring migration:

- Switch off outdoor lights at night
- Plant native flowers for nectar
- Avoid insecticides in the garden
- Gently usher indoor moths outside

Talking tip: lead with wonder and action rather than loss. A moth at the window is a traveller with an amazing story to tell.

Scan for the full fact sheet: prpw.com.au/project/bogong-moth

Words and photos: Peter Rowland · *Wonder through nature* · Version 1.0, November 2026

Sources: Australian Museum, Bogong Moth (2026); Dreyer et al. 2025, Nature 643: 994–1000; IUCN Red List assessment (2021); Alpine Resorts Victoria; DCCEEW listing advice (Feb 2025); Zoos Victoria Moth Tracker. Check curriculum links at curriculum.nsw.edu.au.