Orocrambus fugitivellus (Hudson, 1951)

A drowned world

Quickfacts
A moth only known from one location in the eastern Mackenzie Basin.
Habitat is unusual in that it is periodically flooded.

An ephemeral habitat

The moth *Orocrambus fugitivellus* is only known from one seasonally wet grassland site of several hectares in the eastern Mackenzie Basin. Here they can be locally abundant (particularly males) in late summer, inhabiting native and exotic grasses and sedges. Unusually, this habitat can be inundated with water in early spring-summer, and then extremely dry by the time the adult moths emerge. No one knows how the moth survives being covered in water for months at a time. The land it inhabits is a mixture of freehold and Pastoral Lease land, with the surrounding known habitat having been developed, thus confining *Orocrambus fugitivellus* to this small remaining habitat.

It was first discovered, at its current site, in 1939, and then described as a new species in the family Crambidae by Hudson in 1951. It was not seen again until 1976/77. They are day-active moths active between January and March. Males have a wingspan of 2 cm, but females are short-winged (brachypterous) and flightless. As the females are flightless, their dispersal to new sites is limited. Threats to its survival include development of its habitat for farming. A covenant was proposed to protect where *Orocrambus*
fugitvellus habitat exists during the Tenure Review of the property's Pastoral Lease.

What next?

The following has been recommended to sustain the habitat which supports Oroccrampus fugitvellus:

- Maintain grazing as present (preferably sheep)
- No disturbance of soil (including fertilisation and sowing), burning of wetland/shrubland/grassland habitat or erection of buildings
- Annual and three-yearly monitoring of the site

Additionally, information regarding it’s biology and population trend are required.

Population monitoring of this species is likely to cost $12,000 p.a. over the next 5 years to also gain information on its biology. After 5 years population monitoring should only be required every third year and will cost $5,000.

More information

Webpage: Landcare Research: Oroccrampus fugitvellus. Link

Photos