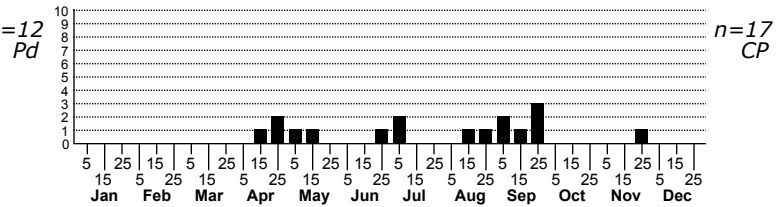
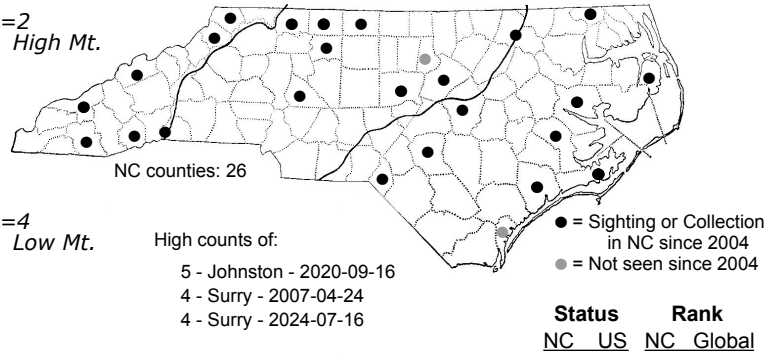
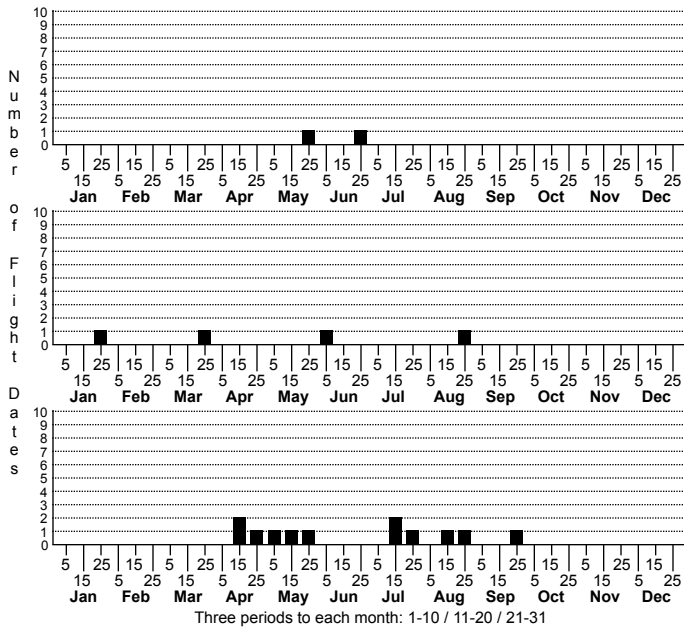


Latrodectus mactans Southern black widow



ORDER:ARANEAE INFRAORDER:Araneomorphae
 FAMILY:Theridiidae

TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: The etymology of the genus name "Latrodectus" being in question, Cameron (2017) suggests it was created by Walckenaer to mean "biting secretly." The epithet "mactans", among other things means "slaughtering" or "killing."

FLD_GUIDE_DESCRIPTIONS: Differentiation between *L. mactans* and *variolus* is often based on the mactan's loss of dorsal markings on the abdomen, and the contiguous nature of its infamous ventral "hour glass." Furthermore, mactans is the more common species in NC, and typically occurs in warmer regions of the state, including the coastal plain. None of these characteristics is definitive, however, and much variation occurs. The males of the two species can be visually separated by the number of lateral lines on the abdomen: *L. mactans* has three, while *variolus* has four. (Females are virtually impossible to definitively determine short of dissecting the epigynum, where one finds mactan's conducting ducts having four coils, while *variolus* has but three.)

DISTRIBUTION_COMMENTS: Common in the southeast, but extends into S. NY & New England, W. through S. OH, IN, IL, MO, and central Kansas. S through OK and TX.

HABITAT: roadside, pasture, woodpile, under rocks, in sheds, in loose bark ; tangle of tough silk, funnel retreat