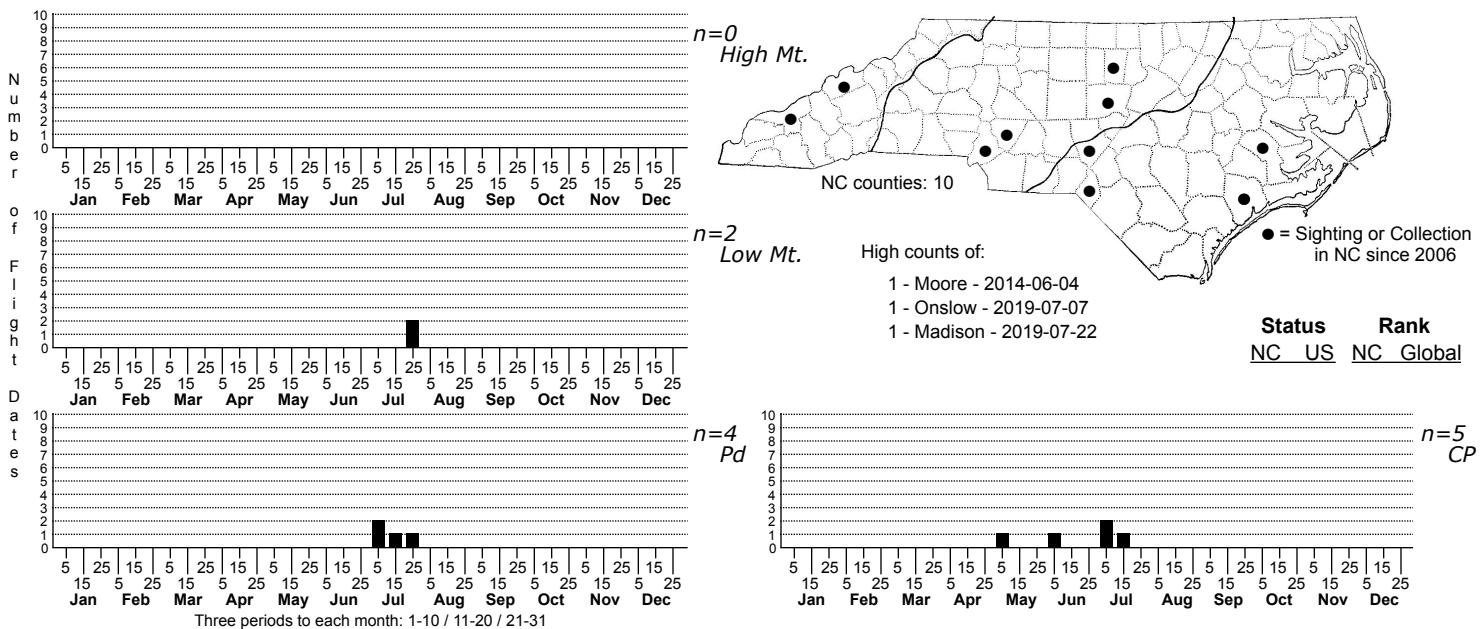


Menesta melanella Black Menesta



FAMILY: Depressariidae SUBFAMILY: Stenomatinae TRIBE: [Stenomatini]

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: This is one of only two species of *Menesta* that occur north of Mexico, and both occur in the eastern US.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle (2018).

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Duckworth (1964), Murtfeldt (1890).

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Murtfeldt (1890), Eiseman (2019).

ID COMMENTS: Adults are readily identified by the conspicuous whitish triangular mark that occurs about midway on the costa of each forewing. A small white dot occurs near the tip of each triangular mark. The fringe on the outer margin is whitish, and the legs are predominantly white and contrast with the shiny black ground color. *M. tortriciformella* is somewhat similar, but lacks the triangular marks on the forewings.

DISTRIBUTION: *Menesta melanella* is primarily found in the southeastern US, with northern isolates in New Jersey, Massachusetts and Ontario. This species likely occurs statewide where suitable host plants are present. As of 2020, most of our records are from the Coastal Plain and eastern Piedmont, with one record from a low-elevation site in the mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: We have only a few records for NC. Based on records from here and nearby states, the flight period likely extends from June through August.

HABITAT: The larvae are most commonly found on two species of oaks that are associated with dry, upland forests or xeric habitats such as sandhills, south-facing slopes, dry ridges and rocky bluffs.

FOOD: This species is a specialist on oaks. Post Oak (*Q. stellata*) and Black Oak (*Q. velutina*) appear to be important primary hosts (Murtfeldt, 1890; Duckworth 1964; Marquis et al., 2019). Other documented hosts include White Oak (*Q. alba*), Bear Oak (*Q. ilicifolia*), Chestnut Oak (*Q. montana*), Chinquapin Oak (*Q. muehlenbergii*) (Eiseman, 2022). Bear Oak is rare in NC and is presumed to be an insignificant food source. As of 2024, our only confirmed record in North Carolina is for Sand Post Oak (*Quercus margaretiae*).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults are attracted to blacklights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: [GNR] S3S4

STATE PROTECTION: Has no legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: We have only a few records for NC as of 2019 even though the host plants are relatively abundant within the state. This species appears to be generally uncommon throughout its range, with most states having fewer than 10 records.