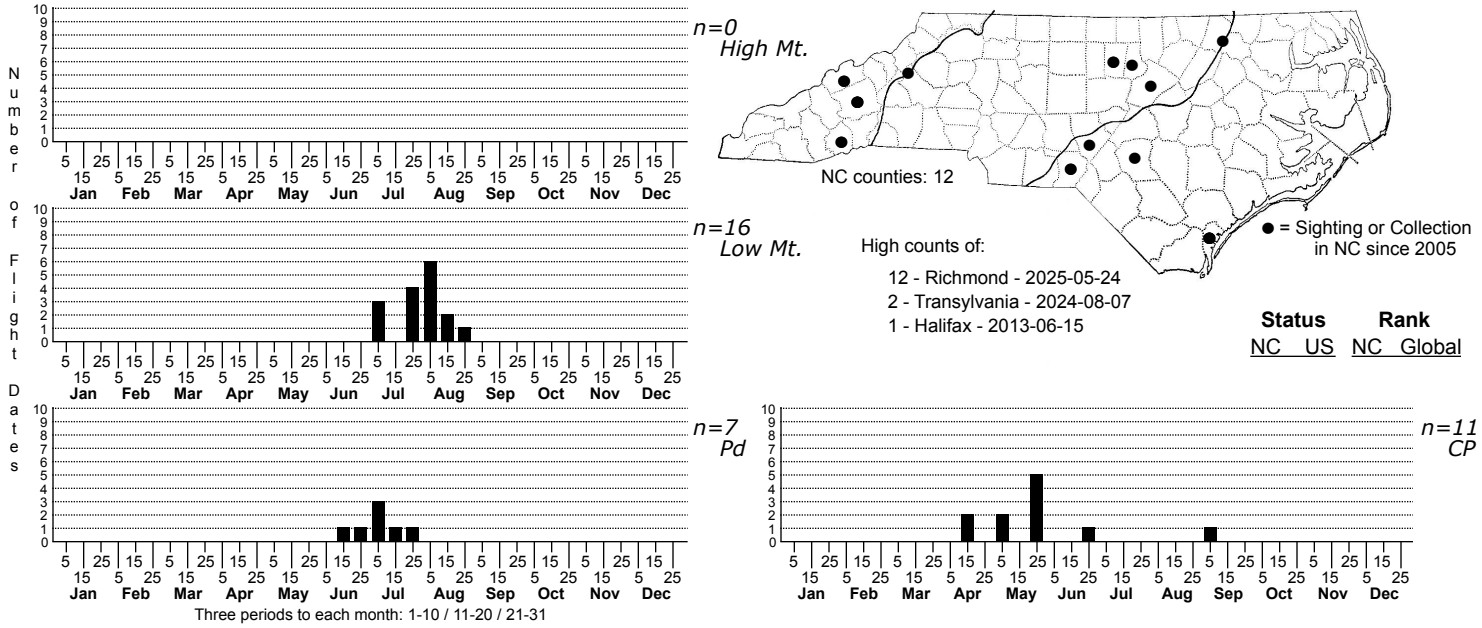
Decantha stecia Small Decantha



FAMILY: Oecophoridae SUBFAMILY: Oecophorinae TRIBE: Oecophorini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Decantha is a small genus with a largely holarctic distribution. There are currently seven recognized species, including four in North American.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle, 2018
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Hodges (1974)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: D. stecia has external markings that are very similar to those of D. boreasella, but is smaller (forewing length = 4.0-6.5 mm for D. boreasella versus 3.0-3.5 mm for D. stecia), has a dark brown thorax (light golden in D. boreasella), and has less dark pigmentation on the dorsal half of the wing tip. The following detailed description is based in part on the description by Hodges (1974). The head is mainly shining brown, and the frons has white scales medially. The first segment and base of the second segment of the labial palp are mainly dark gray, while the distal half of the second segment is mainly white with scattered dark-gray scales. The third segment is mainly white with a complete gray ring at the base and an incomplete one at two-thirds the length. The dorsal surface of the scape of the antenna is mainly dark brown with an incomplete white line running from the base to the apex on the anterior margin. The shaft has alternating white and dark brown scale rows. The thorax is dark brown and adjoins a basal band on the forewing that is concolorous and faintly white margined on the posterior margin. The remainder of the wing consists of a reticulated pattern of dark brown marks on a golden background. There are three dark marks on the costa that include a triangular mark at about one-third the wing length, a more squarish costal mark at about two-thirds, and a terminal costal mark near the apex. The dorsal margin has a somewhat rectangular mark at about one-half and a small patch of dark brown scale at the tornus that is often continuous with the second costal mark. The dark marks have white margins on one or both sides, and are interconnected by a line of white and/or black scales to form a reticulated pattern. The coxa of the foreleg is mainly yellowish gray, the femur slightly darker, and the tibia dark brown with a few white scales at the base, middle and apex. The tarsus is dark brown with the apex of the first, second and all of fifth segment white. The midleg is similar, but the pale areas on the tibia and tarsus are more extensive. The hindleg is mainly shining yellowish gray to darker gray.

DISTRIBUTION: Decantha stecia ranges from Vermont and Massachusetts southward to central Florida and the Gulf Coast, and westward to Kentucky, Arkansas, and eastern Texas. As of 2023, we have scattered records ranging from the mountains to the coast, but with no records so far from higher elevations.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults have been recorded from April through October in different areas of the country, with a strong seasonal peak during July and August. As of 2023, our records extend from late May to mid-August, with a peak in activity in June and July. Local populations in North Carolina are univoltine.

HABITAT: The habitat is largely unknown. Wagner et al. (2003) found this species in pitch pine-scrub oak barrens in New England and surmised that it fed under the bark of Pitch Pine. Our records are mostly from wooded sites, but we are unaware of any larval records for this species.

FOOD: The larval life history is poorly known, but Wagner, Nelson & Schweitzer (2003) suggest that larva may feed beneath the bark of pine trees in New England.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SU

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

COMMENTS: This species appears to be uncommon in the state, but additional information on its distribution and abundance is needed before we can assess its conservation status.