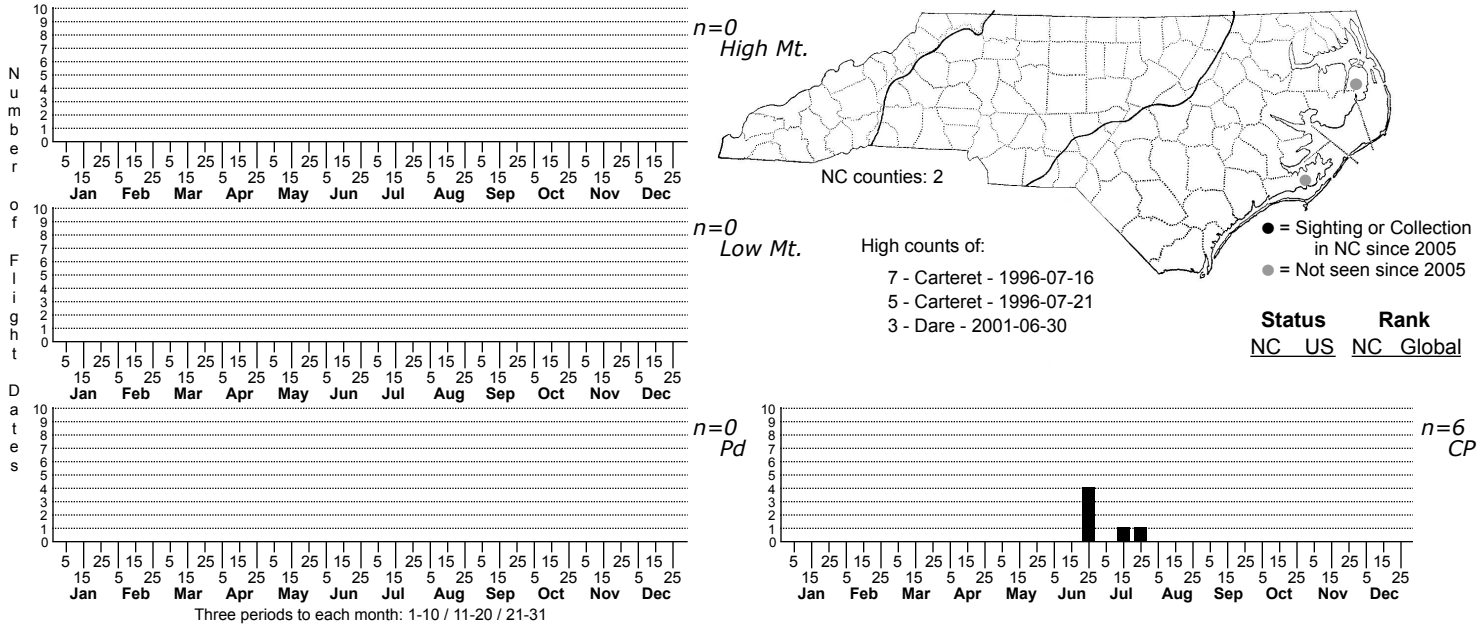
Dargida aleada None



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Hadenini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: This is a large New World genus which recently has included the species formerly placed in Faronta. Three species occur in North Carolina. While primarily a genus of high altitude species in the West, Central and South America, our species occur at sea level with some penetrating the mountains.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Not in either field guide
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Good descriptions of the adults appear to be lacking except for Smith's original description (available through BugGuide).
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: This species resembles our other Dargida species but is largely unmarked, the forewing is straw-colored, and the hindwing is white. While it looks much like some species of Leucania that fly in sand dunes, it lacks all traces of forewing lines and dark postmedial and marginal spots that are typical of that genus. The apex of the forewings is also more pointed than in Leucania species and the outer margin more oblique. Worn specimens of males can be easily distinguished from Leucania spp. by genitalic features.

DISTRIBUTION: Appears to be restricted to outer shorelines of the Barrier Islands.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults have been taken in mid July but that is a strange emergence time for a single brooded species. There may be a spring and fall brood as well.

HABITAT: This species is associated with dunes along the beaches of North Carolina, and seems to be most common in the vegetation closest to the ocean.

FOOD: Larvae undoubtedly feed on coastal grasses, probably the seed heads, but have never been found.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Adults come to light but their response to bait or flowers is unknown.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SH

STATE PROTECTION: Listed as Significantly Rare by the Natural Heritage Program. That designation, however, does not confer any legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: Very few records exist for this species from anywhere within its range and the form we have is also likely to represent a different species than the type for this species collected in Texas. If it turns out to feed on Sea Oats or one of the other common beach grass species, it should be expected to turn up in more places. Larval searches are needed to determine the host plants and may also give a better picture of its distribution and abundance than the few records we have for the adults. As a maritime dune grass species, it may adversely affected by sea level rise, particularly in areas, such as the Outer Banks, where barrier islands may disappear.