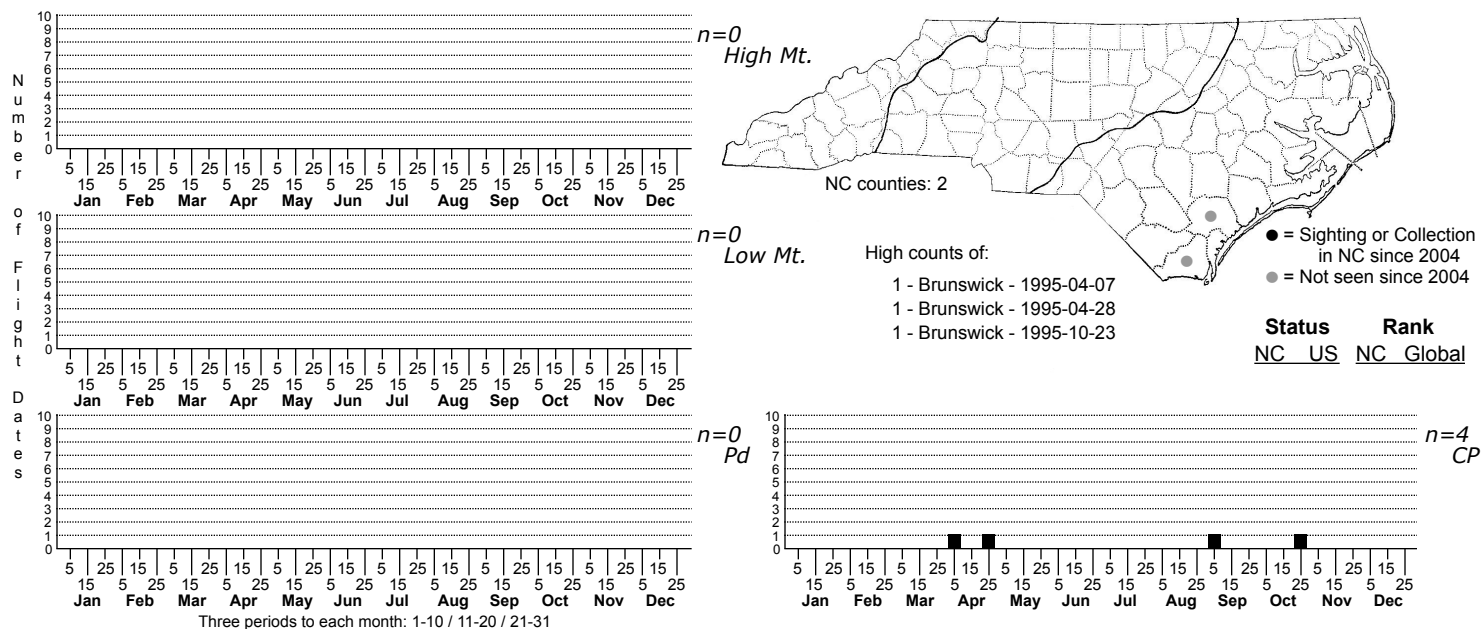


## *Leucania incognita* Unknown Wainscot



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Leucaniini

TAXONOMIC\_COMMENTS: One of 30 species in this genus that occur in North America north of Mexico (Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2010; Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2015), 16 of which have been recorded in North Carolina. Previously included in Subfamily Hadeninae but moved to the much expanded Noctuinae by Lafontaine and Schmidt. They also included it in Tribe Leucaniini along with *Mythimna*.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Barnes and McDunnough (1918); Poole (2016)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: One of the smaller members of this genus (only *extincta* has a shorter wingspan). The ground color of the forewings is tan to darker brown (Poole, 2016, describes it as a rich, dark in Florida specimens), with a scattering of darker spots or specks. A conspicuous streak of darker brown runs from the base of the wing along the median vein out as far as the cell and occasionally all the way to the postmedian; a white dot or short line is located within this streak at the cell, partially surrounding a dark dot. The postmedian consists of an arching series of dark dots that are sometimes joined to form a dentate line. The hindwings are a shiny white with a distinctive series of dots along the upper portion of the terminal area (Barnes and McDunnough, 1918). *Leucania scirpicola* has a similar dark longitudinal streak with a white spot in the cell, but has smoother, less speckled forewings and has hindwings that are shaded with fuscous, particularly along the outer margin (Poole, 2016). *Leucania subpunctata* is another species with similar markings but is darker gray on the forewings and has dark streaks along the veins on the hindwings (Poole, 2016). For accurate identification of this species, photographs should show both the hindwings and the forewings; inclusion of wing measurements would also help.

DISTRIBUTION: Appears to be confined to the southern portion of the Outer Coastal Plain

FLIGHT COMMENT: Our records suggest that this species is bivoltine, with both an early spring and fall flight

HABITAT: All of our records come from high quality, wet Longleaf Pine savannas

FOOD: Apparently unknown but the majority of species in this genus feed on grasses

OBSERVATION\_METHODS: Comes to blacklights but we have too few data to know how well. Other members of this genus come to bait but this has not been recorded for this species.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR [SH]

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

COMMENTS: We have very few records for this species in North Carolina. However it has been collected several times and in different seasons at one site in the Coastal Plain, suggesting that it has a resident population there and is not just a migrant. Our records further suggest that *incognita* is a specialist on high quality, frequently burned, Longleaf Pine Savannas. If so, then it probably relies on a recolonization strategy to cope with frequent local extirpations and is consequently highly vulnerable to the fragmenting effects of habitat conversion and fire suppression that have affected other moths associated with this habitat type. However, this species apparently has a fairly large range that includes Florida, Texas, Arizona, Central America and the Caribbean (Poole, 2016). That indicates that several different habitat and/or host plants are used. Consequently, more needs to be learned about its host plants, habitat use, and dispersal abilities here in North Carolina before an accurate assessment can be made of its conservation status.