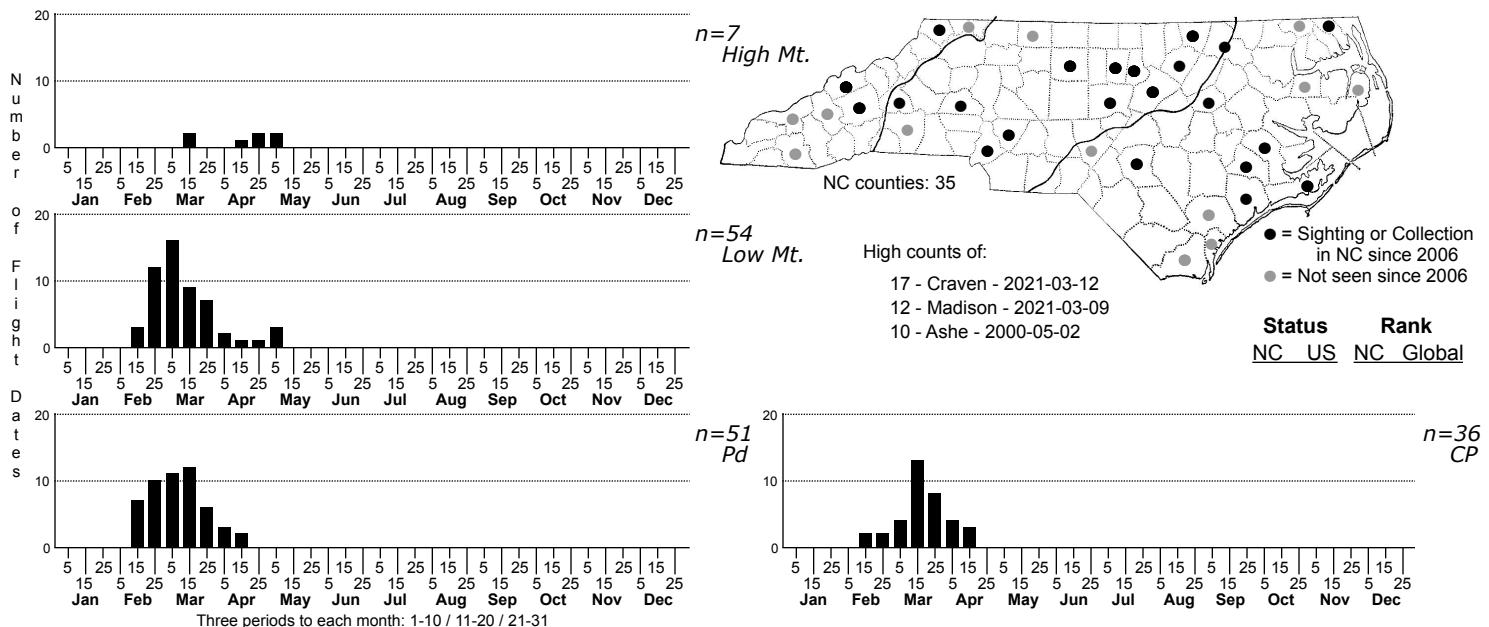


Cerastis tenebrifera Reddish Speckled Dart



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Noctuini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The genus *Cerastis* has undergone significant change in the past 20 years, primarily due to its fusion with *Metalepsis*. It now contains about 13 species almost equally split between the Nearctic (mostly *Metalepsis*) and the Palearctic (mostly *Cerastis*). The combined genus is closely related to *Choephora*. We have two species in North Carolina, both of which fly early in the spring.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Lafontaine (1998)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1954); Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: The forewing is brick red with circular grey reniform and orbicular spots. There is a distinct black rectangular spot on the forewing costa in *C. fishii* which is absent in *C. tenebrifera*. Sexes are similar.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs throughout the state and into the higher mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, with adults flying in late winter into early spring

HABITAT: Our records come almost entirely from hardwood-dominated forests, with almost none from more open habitats, such as maritime dunes, shrub-dominated peatlands, Longleaf Pine habitats, or old fields. Hardwood habitats used by this species range from floodplain forests to dry mountain slopes and summits.

FOOD: Larvae are probably polyphagous. In captivity, they accept a wide range of both forbs (e.g., lettuce and dandelion -- Forbes, 1954; Crumb, 1956) and trees (e.g., cherry, birch, willow -- McCabe, in Wagner et al., 2011). There are BugGuide records of larvae on Wood Anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*) and greenbrier (*Smilax* sp.). We do not have any feeding records in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults come to lights but not to bait but may come to flowers (of which there are very few during its flight period). However, a British member of the same genus does occur at willow blossoms (Porter, 1997). Larvae should be sought early in April before they become sizable and retreat from the foodplant by day.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4S5]

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

COMMENTS: Although more needs to be learned about the host plants and habitat associations of this species, it is found widely throughout the state and occupies a wide range of common habitats; it thus appears to be secure within the state.