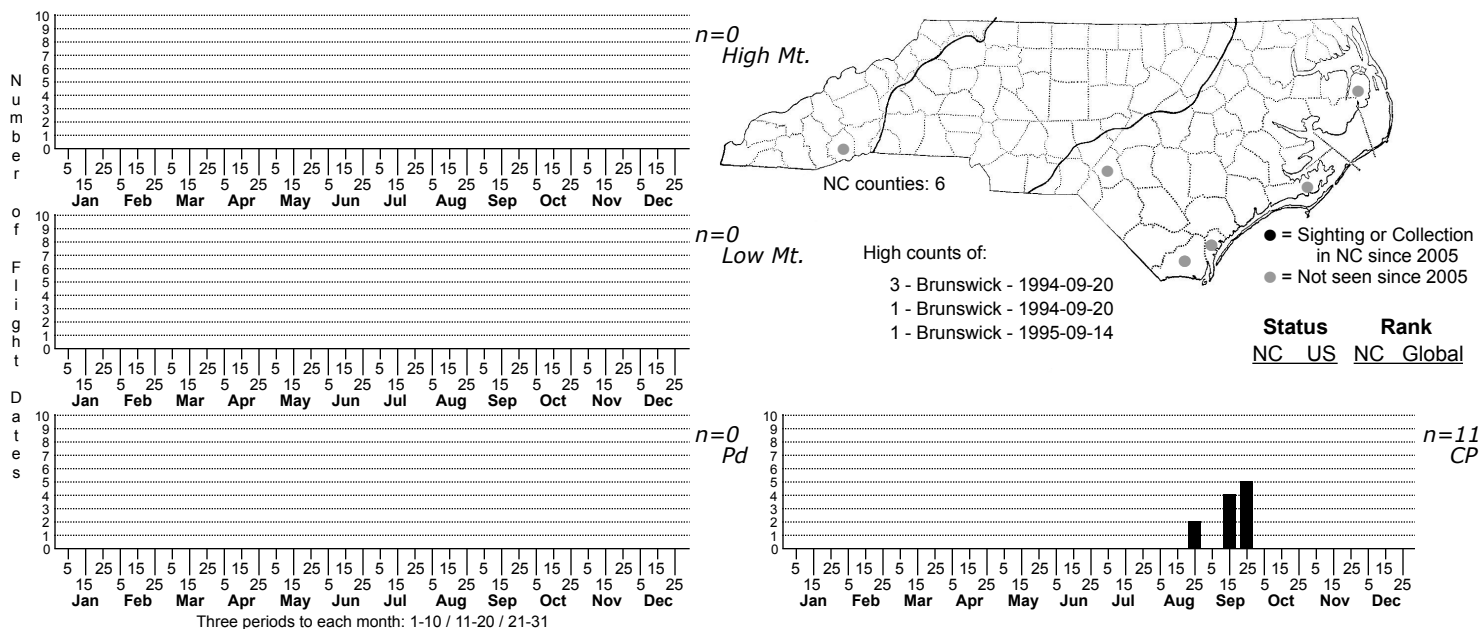


Pyrrhia aurantiago Orange Sallow



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Heliiothinae TRIBE:

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of three species in this genus that occur in North America (Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2010), all of which have been recorded in North Carolina. This species was previously included in the genus Rhodoecia, which was merged with Pyrrhia by Pogue (2008).

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984; as Rhodoecia aurantiago)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Schweitzer et al. (2011)

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

ID COMMENTS: A medium-sized Sun Moth. The ground color is dull orange to brown and variably shaded with purplish; the forewings of very fresh specimens can be completely overlain by reddish scales (Schweitzer et al., 2011). The postmedian is strongly dentate, unlike the smooth lines found in Pyrrhia cilisca and exprimens (Schweitzer et al., 2011). The spots in aurantiago are also purplish but are paler yellow or orange in the other species. Hindwings are yellowish at the base but shading into dull red outwardly (Forbes, 1954).

DISTRIBUTION: Our records come primarily from the southern half of the Coastal Plain, with Wray's historic record from the Low Mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, with adults flying in late August and September

HABITAT: Except for the one record from the Mountains, where the habitat was not recorded, our records all come from dry-to-xeric, sandy habitat in the Coastal Plain, including Pine-Scrub Oak Sandhills, Coastal Fringe Sandhills, and Maritime Forests.

FOOD: Larvae are apparently stenophagous, feeding on species of false foxglove (<i>Aureolaria</i> spp.). Based on the habitats used in North Carolina, Combleaf Yellow False Foxglove (<i>A. pectinata</i>) - associated with Turkey Oak woodlands and other dry oak habitats - seems the most likely species to be used, at least in the Coastal Plain.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes to blacklights to some extent, but like other members of the Heliiothinae, searches for larvae or adults resting on the flowers of their host plants may be the most effective way of finding this specie (Wagner et al., 2011).

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G3G4 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: This species is regarded as uncommon to rare throughout its range and is considered historic and possibly extirpated in several states where it once occurred (Schweitzer et al., 2011). In North Carolina, our records are sparsely distributed, but this species was recorded regularly at three sites, indicating it is a resident rather than a stray. Searches for larvae and adults resting on flowers needs to be done to better determine this species' actual distribution and conservation status. However, overbrowsing by deer and suppression of the natural fire regime have been strongly implicated in its decline elsewhere and are likely to be at work in our area as well. It may therefore be secure only on federal lands and state gamelands where a combination of prescribed burning and deer hunting may be maintaining habitat suitability.