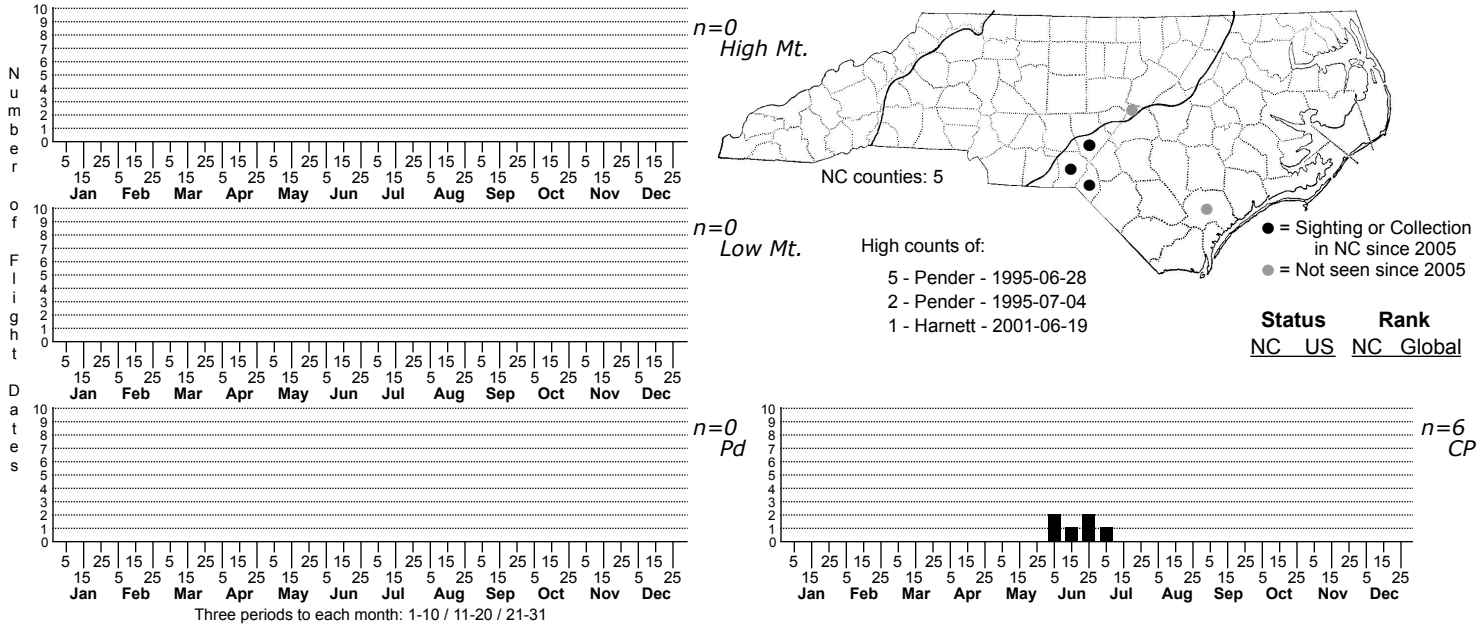
Schinia jaguarina Jaguar Flower Moth



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Heliothinae TRIBE:
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of 126 species in this genus that occur in North America (Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2010, 2011), the majority of which occur in the West; 25 have been recorded in North Carolina.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Hardwick (1996); Bess (2005)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Wyatt (1953); Hardwick (1996); Bess (2005)

ID COMMENTS: A medium sized Noctuid but one of the largest Flower Moths. This species has a bicolored pattern, with the median and terminal areas of the forewing being tan to luteous and contrasting with the darker brown basal and subterminal areas. The antemedian and postmedian lines are pale and fine; the spots are obscure. The hindwing is bright yellow with a dark brown discal spot and terminal band; a yellow spot is also located next to the margin within the terminal band and is diagnostic for this species (Forbes, 1954). Schinia lynx has a similar pattern but is much smaller and lacks the yellow spot in the marginal band. Photographs submitted as records for this species should show the hindwings; otherwise, some measurement of wingspan or forewing length should be provided.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably restricted to the southern half of the Coastal Plain, including the Fall-line Sandhills

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, flying in June and July

HABITAT: Except for the historic record given in Brimley (1938), for which the habitat was not recorded, all of our records come from loammy Longleaf Pine savannas or Sandhill Seeps possessing populations of Orbexilum peduncutlatum and other species of Fabaceae indicative of clay layers embedded within otherwise sandy substrates.

FOOD: Larvae are reportedly stenophagous, feeding on species of scurf-pea (formerly Psoralea but now divided into Orbexilum and a few other genera) (Wyatt, 1953; Bess, 2005). In North Carolina, the species appears to be associated with Western Sampson's-snakeroot (Orbexilum pedunculatum = Psoralea psoraliodes), a host plant also used in the Ohio Valley (Bess, 2005).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes at least to some extent to blacklights, but searches for larvae or adults resting on the flowers of the host plant may provide a more efficient way of surveying for this species.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 S1S2

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 strongly associated with native grasslands and has the main part of its range in the prairies of the Midwest (Bess, 2005; Metzlar et al., 2005). Despite its wide range, it is considered local or rare in most of the area where it occurs (Bess, 2005). In North Carolina, we have only a few records, all from very high quality Longleaf Pine communities with particular soil conditions. As elsewhere in its range, suppression of the natural fire regime has had a major impact on the open, herbaceous communities upon which this species strongly depends. Larvae are also likely to be highly vulnerable to fire, at least during the late summer when they are actively feeding. The pupal stage, in which they spend most of the year, in contrast, is probably fairly immune to the effects of at least light ground fires. Avoidance of late summer burns, consequently, should be incorporated into management plans directed at the conservation of this species, as well as several other Flower Moths that occupy the same habitats and follow similar life histories.