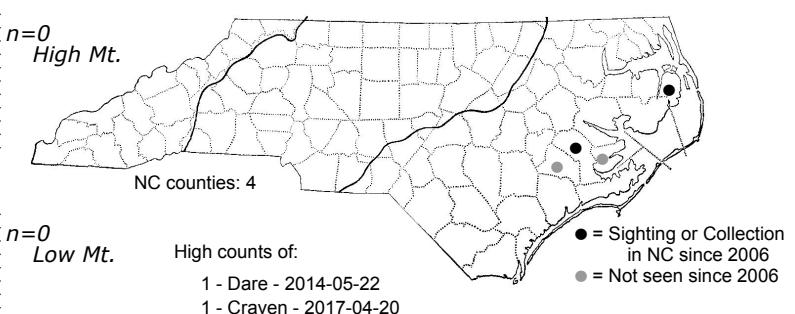


# *Homaledra sabalella* Palm Leaf Skeletonizer Moth



Status	Rank		
NC	US	NC	Global

n=3  
CP

FAMILY: Pterolonchidae SUBFAMILY: TRIBE:

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: *Homaledra* is a small genus with only six recognized species that are found in the New World, including two species that were recently described from Florida (Hayden, 2021).

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle (2018)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: (Howard and Abreu (2007)

ID COMMENTS: This is a distinctive moth with the head, antenna, thorax, and forewing all uniformly coffee-cream colored or beige. The forewings are narrow and elongated, and held flat when resting. The thorax has a tiny black dot at the posterior tip, and the forewing has two elongated dots, one adjoining the inner margin at about one-half the wing length, and a second near the middle of the wing at about four-fifths. A fine row of elongated terminal spots are present and best developed in fresh specimens. The legs are light brown with a few faint blackish blotches, and the foreleg often has a prominent black tip.

*Homaledra knudsoni* closely resembles *H. sabalella*. Both species occur in North Carolina and are similar in having a beige-colored forewing with black spots. They are most easily separated by the length and color of the antennae. For *H. knudsoni*, the antennae are longer than the forewing and grayish at the tip, while in *H. sabalella* they are shorter than the forewing and uniformly tan-colored. *Homaledra knudsoni* also has a pecten at the base of the antenna, and the veins of the forewing have whitish scales (absent in *H. sabalella*). Finally, the line of terminal black dashes is more prominent and extends farther basally in *H. knudsoni*.

DISTRIBUTION: *Homaledra sabalella* is found in the southeastern US and the Greater Antilles, including Cuba, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico (Howard and Abreu (2007)). This species is common and widespread in Florida. The range extends westward along the coast to eastern Texas, and northward along coastal regions of South Carolina to central North Carolina. The range may have expanded to some extent since palms have been widely planted as ornamentals in many areas of the Southeast. As of 2025, we have records from four counties near the coast.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Local populations are multivoltine and are active year-round in Florida. Outside of Florida, the adults have been found from April through August. As of 2025, our two dated records are from April, May and August.

HABITAT: Our records for this species as of 2025 come from sites along the coast where *Sabal minor* occurs but where *Sabal palmetto* is only present as cultivated specimens. Its presence at our one natural stand of *Sabal palmetto* on Bald Head Island needs to be determined.

FOOD: The larvae feed on a large number of palm species, including 78 species that Howard and Abreu (2007) have documented. Dwarf Palmetto (*Sabal minor*) and Cabbage Palmetto (*Sabal palmetto*) appear to be the most important native hosts in the Southeast, but Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) is also used (Hayden, 2021).

OBSERVATION METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights and the large, skeletonized areas of palm leaves are easy to spot.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR S1S3

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

COMMENTS: This species reaches the northern limit of its range in North Carolina, where it is uncommon.