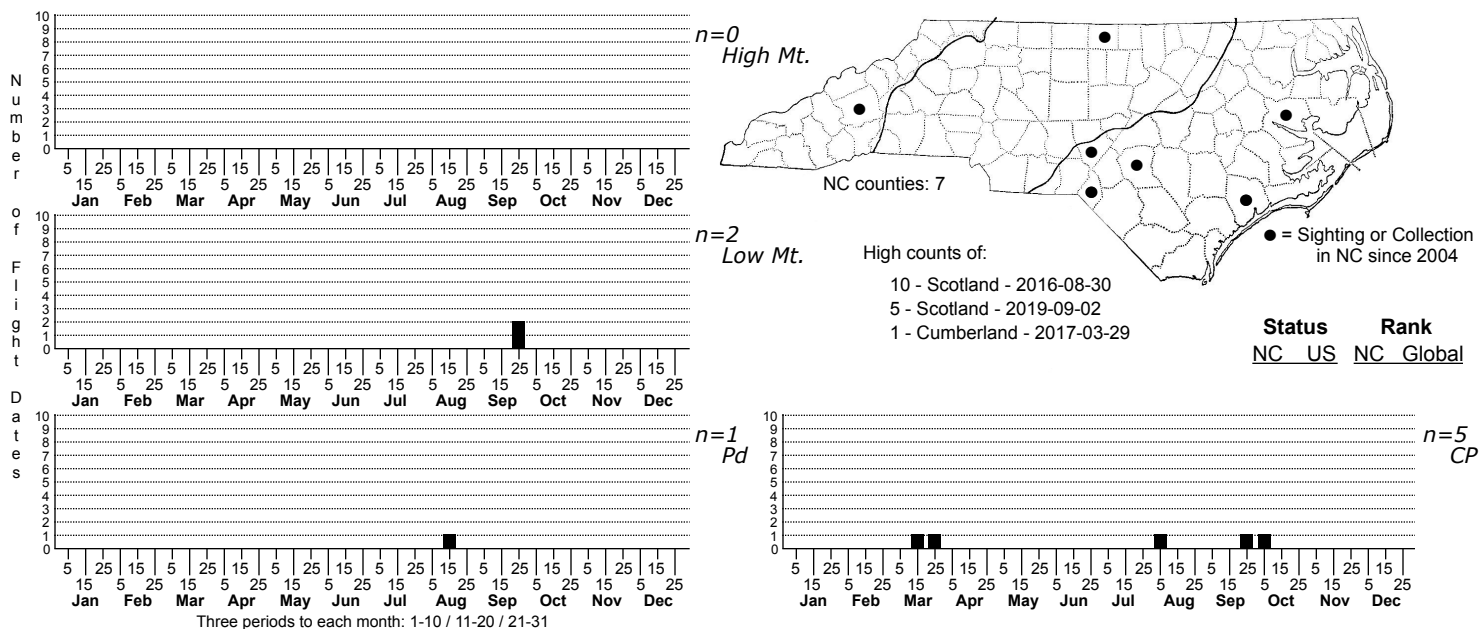


Mompha passerella No common name



FAMILY: Momphidae SUBFAMILY: Momphinae TRIBE: [momphini]

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The genus *Mompha* consists of around 46 described species in North America. In addition, numerous species remain to be described that are centered in the southwestern US (Bruzese et al., 2019). The adults are small moths that have two or more tufts of raised scales on each forewing. The larvae either mine leaves, or bore into the stems, flower buds, flowers, or fruits of their hosts. The majority of species feed on members of the Onagraceae, but others feed on species in the Cistaceae, Lythraceae, Melastomataceae, and Rubiaceae.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Busck (1909a); Forbes (1923)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Eiseman (2019)

ID COMMENTS: The following description is primarily based on that of Busck (1909a) and Forbes (1923). The labial palp is long, recurved, and white with a gray spot or ill-defined brown annulation at the end of the second joint. The face, head, and thorax are silvery white, and the antenna brown. Several black dots are usually present towards the front of the body, including one at the front of the thorax, two near its posterior margin, and a small black dot near the base of the forewing near the middle of the wing. The basal half of the forewing is white and slightly overlaid with ochreous. There is a small black costal streak at the basal third that is sometimes reduced to a spot. The exterior half of the wing is strongly overlaid with golden brown, except near the tornus, and is edged towards the white basal half by a tuft of black raised scales near the dorsal edge. Another similar tuft with a whitish base is found near the dorsal edge at the apical third. Between these tufts there is a posteriorly oblique costal streak that is short and black. It is margined posteriorly by a broader white streak that approaches the second scale tuft. One or two additional white costal streaks are usually evident toward the apex. In the apical part of the wing there is a small, longitudinal, central black dash that often has a faint silvery margin on both sides. A transverse black line is present on the apical cilia. The basal two-thirds of the hindwing is deep black, and the apical third fuscous. The legs are white, with the tarsi annulated with black. This species resembles *Mompha eloisella*, but lacks the bold black spotting on the basal half of the body.

DISTRIBUTION: *Mompha passerella* is restricted to eastern North America where it occurs in southern Ontario and the eastern US. Adults have been found in the US from Massachusetts southward to southern Florida, southern Alabama and Mississippi. Most records are from the Coastal Plain, but a few scattered records are from further inland, including Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and western North Carolina. As of 2021, all of our records are from the Coastal Plain, except for one isolated record from a lower elevation site in the Blue Ridge.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults can be found year-round in Florida and from April through October in areas outside of North Carolina. As of 2021, we have adult records that extends from as early as March on the coast to September and October farther inland.

HABITAT: The larvae feed on frostweeds and pinweeds, which are members of the Cistaceae. These are commonly found in relatively dry, sandy, open habitats. The only documented host in North Carolina is Hairy Pinweed, which can be found in dry openings, fields, sandhills, dunes, and similar habitats.

FOOD: The known hosts include species of *Crocanthemum* and *Lechea*. Hairy Pinweed (*Lechea mucronata*) is the only documented host within the state, but other species in the Cistaceae are presumably used.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults occasionally visit lights. We recommend searching for the leaf mines and rearing adults to better document host use in North Carolina.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR [SU]

STATE PROTECTION:

COMMENTS: As of 2021, we have only five site records. We are uncertain if the paucity of records reflects true rarity or the undercollecting of specimens.