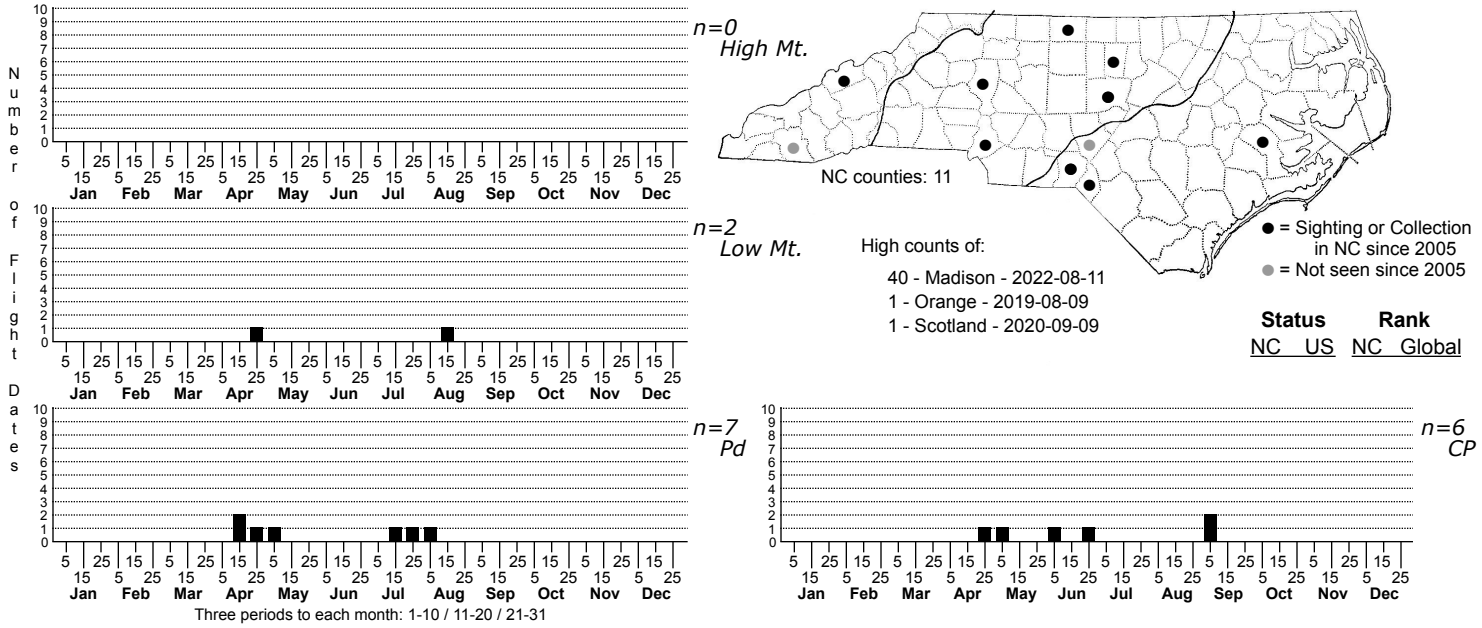
Triclonella pergandeella Bush-clover Triclonella



FAMILY: Cosmopterigidae SUBFAMILY: Cosmopteriginae TRIBE: [Cosmopterigini]
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Triclonella is a New World genus with approximately 20 species that occur from Washington, D.C. and northwest Arkansas south through Central America and the Antilles to northern Argentina. Five species occur in America north of Mexico (Hodges, 1978).

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Leckie and Beadle (2018)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Hodges (1978)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Busck (1901a)

ID COMMENTS: This is a distinctive moth with a bold two-toned pattern and a small black dot on the forewing. The following detailed description is based on those of Busck (1901a) and Forbes (1923). The antenna is purplish black, with two silvery white, thin, longitudinal lines from the base to the tip. The labial palp is black, and the second joint has four longitudinal thin silvery white lines. The terminal joint has a single longitudinal white line in front. The face and head are brownish black with a thin white line over the eyes. The thorax and basal three-fifth of the forewing are light brownish-yellow, and there is a small black, white-edged dot on the middle of the cell at about two-fifths the wing length. The outer two-fifths of the wing is purple-black and is edged on the anterior border with a thin line of white scales. The boundary with the brownish-yellow portion begins on the costa at about four-fifths and extends obliquely in a broadly wavy pattern to the middle of the inner margin. A small white spot is present near the tornus. The basal part of the cilia is black and sprinkled with white scales, while the tips of the cilia are mouse gray. The hindwing and cilia are fuscous to purplish gray, and the abdomen purplish black. The legs are mostly purplish black, with indistinct silvery annulations on the tarsi. The hind tibia has one broad silvery annulation and silvery white outer spurs. Ponometia semiflava is somewhat similar, but the head is yellow and it lacks the black dot. Anacampsis coverdalella is also similar, but has a dark brown thorax and wing base.

DISTRIBUTION: Triclonella pergandeella is found in the southeastern US from North Carolina, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Oklahoma southward to central Texas, the Gulf Coast states, and Florida. There is one record to as far north as the District of Columbia. We have records from all three physiographic provinces, with most coming from the Piedmont.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been observed from February through October in areas outside of North Carolina. Populations in North Carolina appear to be bivoltine, with the first brood in the spring and the second in summer.

HABITAT: This species feeds on legumes such as Perplexed Tick-trefoil and Maryland Butterfly-pea that are most commonly found in rather open, sunny, and somewhat dry habitats. Typical habitats include woodland borders, roadbanks, old fields, openings in woods, powerline corridors, and open, brushy areas.

FOOD: The known hosts (Busck, 1901a; Heppner, 2003; Robinson et al, 2010) are all legumes and include Fragrant pigeonwings (Clitoria fragrans), Maryland Butterfly-pea (C. mariana), Perplexed Tick-trefoil (Desmodium perplexum), and a species of Lespedeza. As of 2022, our only documented host in North Carolina is Maryland Butterfly-pea. Triclonella pergandeella is commonly referred to as the Sweetclover Root Borer Moth, which is a misnomer since it neither bores in roots or uses sweetclovers (Melilotus spp.) as hosts.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights. The larvae are leaf tiers on legumes and have been successfully reared from field collections. More information if needed on host use within the state.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR S3S4

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

COMMENTS: This species appears to be somewhat uncommon in the state, but seems reasonably secure based on the number of site records and that fact that its host plants are rather common.