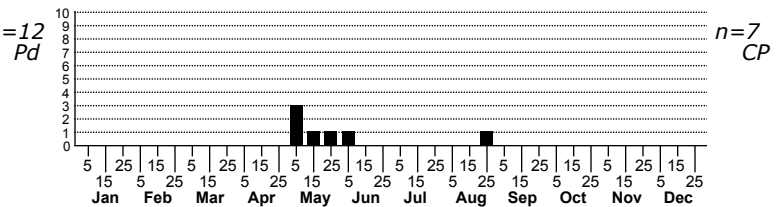
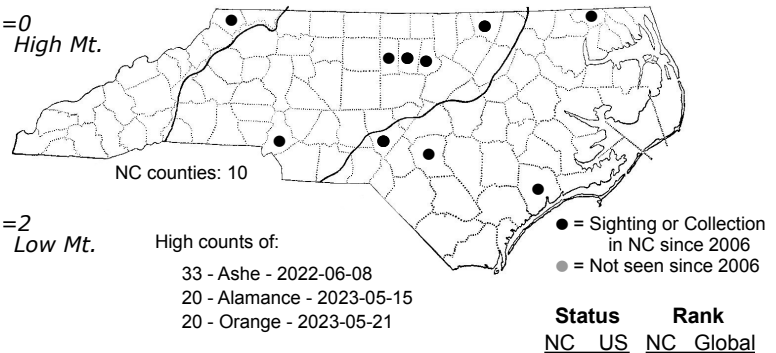
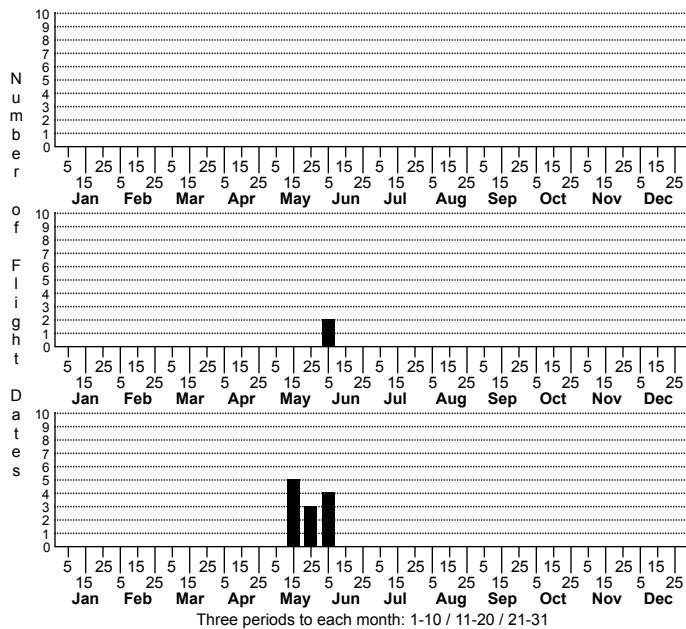


# *Scythris fuscicomella* None



FAMILY: Scythrididae SUBFAMILY: Scythridinae TRIBE: [Scythridini]

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The genus *Scythris* is a member of the Family Scythrididae, whose members display a diversity of genital structures that is probably unsurpassed within any other family in the Lepidoptera (Landry, 1991). The extraordinary diversity in genital morphology in the males of many taxa reaches such extremes that it is easy to recognize species, but difficult to delineate higher taxa. There are around 44 currently recognized species for the Nearctic region. North America has 14 described species, including 10 species of *Scythris*. Most are drably colored moths that superficially resemble one another. Landry (1991) found at least 300 undescribed species in North American collections alone based on genitalic differences, and estimated that there could be as many as 400 and 500 species of scythridids in North America. Many of these are in arid regions of the US.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: Like many of the scythrids, *Scythris fuscicomella* is a rather nondescript species that lacks bold patterning. The adults are diurnally active, and fresh specimens appear to have ebony-black forewings with a more or less pronounced purple or greenish luster. The following detailed description is based on that of Landry (1991). The face, vertex, and thorax have a purplish or golden metallic hue. On many specimens the posterior half of the thorax has a purplish hue that grades towards the color of the forewings. The labial palp is relatively short, porrect or upcurved, and extends to the base of the antenna. The first joint and the basal half of the second are dirty white, and the remainder colored like the head. The antenna is colored like the head and is two-thirds to three-quarters the length of the forewing. It is moniliform, and the proximal two-thirds to three-quarters is distinctly thickened. The forewing is uniformly dark brown, blackish, or ebony black. In males the hindwing is dark brown or olive-brown, while in females it is mostly yellowish or cream-colored with some brown in the costal area. The legs are olive-brown or gray-brown, and the tibial brush on the hind leg is unusually long.

Landry (1991) treated three closely-related forms (*S. eboracensis*; *S. fuscicomella*; *S. basilaris*) as members of the '*Scythris basilaris* group'. All three species occur in the eastern North America, have similar genitalia, and are broadly sympatric. Specimens of *S. basilaris* can be recognized on the basis of coloration, but *S. eboracensis* and *S. fuscicomella* are very similar. Landry (1991) noted that these two may not merit recognition as separate species since intermediates are sometimes found. The antennae are helpful in identifying the latter two species. The proximal two-thirds or three-quarters of the antennal flagellum is distinctly thickened on *S. fuscicomella*, but noticeably thinner in *S. eboracensis*. Unfortunately, worn specimens are often difficult to identify. Geographic range also helps. *Scythris eboracensis* is a more northern form that is mostly found in the northeastern state and Canada, to as far south as Kentucky, while *S. fuscicomella* is found throughout the eastern US to as far south as Florida. This species might also be confused with *Urodox parvula*, but the latter is about twice as long (FWL > 10 mm), and has an antenna that is not noticeably thickened on the basal two-thirds, as is the case with *S. fuscicomella*.

DISTRIBUTION: *Scythris fuscicomella* is found in eastern North America. Most records are from the southeastern United States from central Texas and Oklahoma eastward to Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas. Populations occur as far north as Kentucky and West Virginia, with a few isolated records from southern Manitoba and Nova Scotia. As of 2021, our records are mostly from the eastern Piedmont, with one record from the Sandhills.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Local populations appear to be bivoltine in the southernmost part of the range and univoltine in the north. The adults have been found from April through October in areas outside of North Carolina. Southern populations typically have the first brood in April and May and a second in August and September. Populations in North Carolina are univoltine. As of 2021, our records are from mid-May through early June.

HABITAT: The larval hosts and habitat requirements are undocumented. The adults are frequently spotted nectaring on wildflowers that grow in open, sunny areas.

FOOD: The larval hosts are poorly documented. Robinson et al. (2010) list thistle (*Carduus*), but this requires confirmation.

OBSERVATION METHODS: The adults are diurnally active and only occasionally are seen at lights. They are frequently spotted resting on vegetation or nectaring on flowers.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SU

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

COMMENTS:  
March 2026

The Moths of North Carolina - Early Draft

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