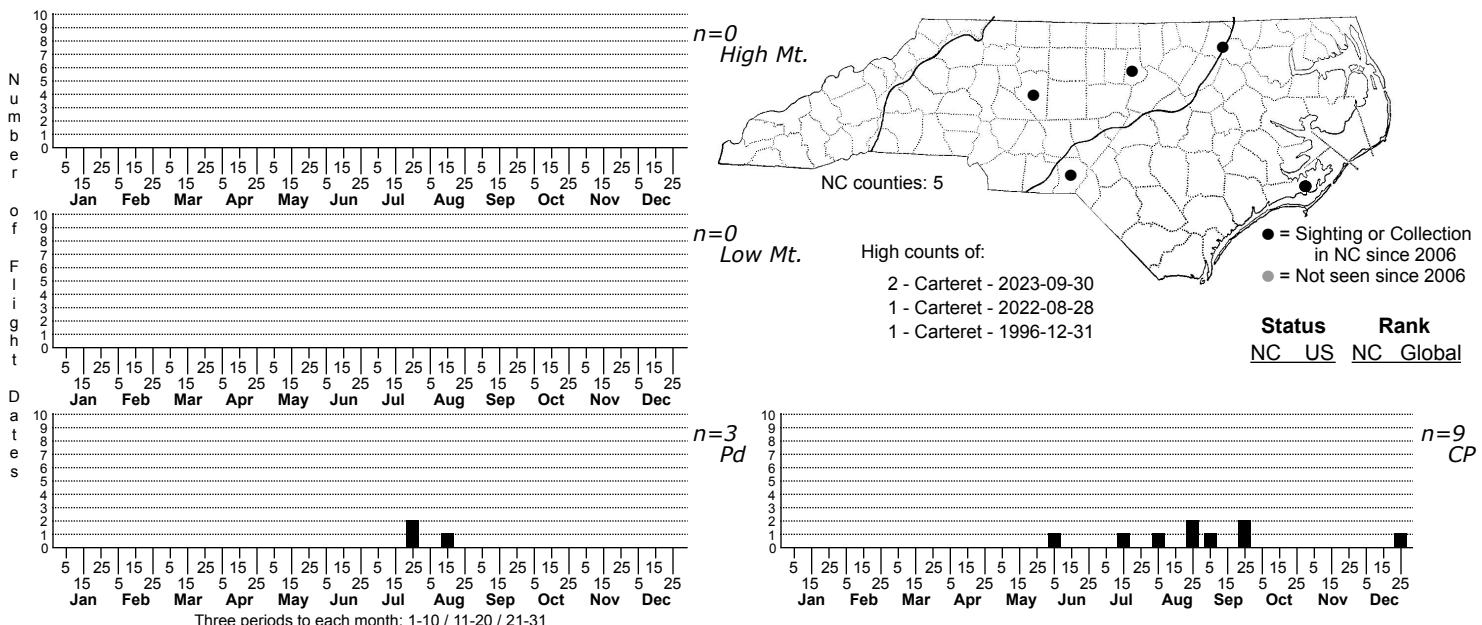


Scythris trivinctella Banded Scythris



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.

Landry (1991) treated *Scythris trivinctella* as a member of a compact group of species that comprises three described species (one of which is extrazonal) and five undescribed species. Members of the group are distinguished in the males by the twisted apex of the distal arm of the gnathos, which terminates into a small warped plate, and in the females by the protruded membranous lobe of the posterior margin of 57. The described species include *S. trivinctella* and *S. ypsilon* from North America, and *S. fluvialis* from Colombia.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: *Scythris trivinctella* is a medium to medium-small scythridid with three conspicuous fasciae on the forewing on a ground color that varies from olive-brown or beige (Landry, 1991). Most specimens have 1) a small, basal fascia at the very base along the anal margin, 2) a more elongated, transverse fascia at one-third, and 3) another transverse fascia at about two-thirds. Both the medial and distal fasciae typically extend from the costa to the inner margin; however, the distal fascia of North Carolina specimens sometimes terminates just before reaching the inner margin. The medial fascia is outwardly oblique towards the inner margin, and the distal one inwardly oblique towards the inner margin. The latter is broader toward the inner margin and appears shortly bifurcate in many specimens. Landry (1991) noted that in some specimens the basal and medial fasciae are joined by a longitudinal white fascia, as is the case for certain specimens from coastal regions of North Carolina. Other specimens from the coast and Piedmont lack the longitudinal white fascia and have three well-separated fasciae as described above. The hindwing in most specimens is beige or olive-brown, but in a few specimens it is dark-brown.

DISTRIBUTION: *Scythris trivinctella* has a very broad distribution across much of the non-arid regions of the US. Landry (1991) documented clusters of populations from the Midwest southward to southern Texas and Louisiana, in Florida, in coastal areas of the Northeast, in central and southern California southward into Mexico, in the northern Rockies and in British Columbia. As of 2025, all of our records are from the Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults of this wide-ranging species have been observed during every month of the year in different areas of the range. As of 2025, all but one of our records (31 December) are from mid-July through late-September.

HABITAT: Our records from the Coastal Plain come from the Sandhills and a barrier island with extensive areas of sandy beach, dune grasslands, maritime scrub, and brackish marsh habitats. The Piedmont records are from fragmented residential areas with a mixture of woods, fields and other disturbed habitats.

FOOD: Larvae have been recorded on *Amaranthus* species, including Smooth Pigweed (*A. hybridus*) and Redroot Amaranth (*A. retroflexus*) (Landry, 1991; Robinson et al., 2010). In North Carolina, several species of *Amaranthus* occur along the edges of coastal marshes, including Saltmarsh Water-hemp (*A. cannabinus*), Southern Water-hemp (*A. australis*), and the very rare Seabeach Amaranth (*A. pumilus*). *A. cannabinus* is restricted to ocean beaches and sand flats. Of these species, *A. cannabinus* has a range that best corresponds to that of *Scythris trivinctella*.

OBSERVATION METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights, and are often seen foraging on wildflowers during the day.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR S2S3

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 uncommon in North Carolina, with only five widely-scattered site records as of 2025.