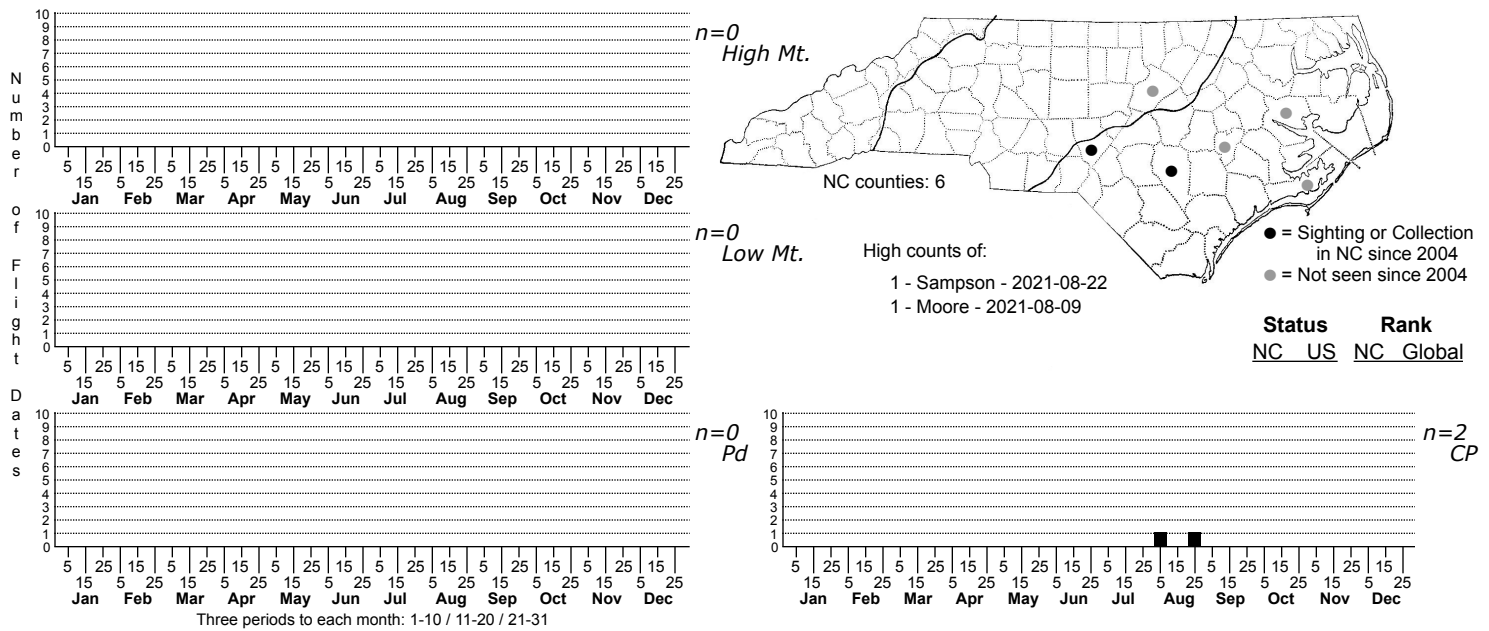


# *Phthorimaea operculella* Potato Tuberworm Moth



FAMILY: Gelechiidae SUBFAMILY: Gelechiinae TRIBE: Gnorimoschemini  
 TAXONOMIC\_COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Gill et al. (2014)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Rondon (2010); Gill et al. (2014)

ID COMMENTS: The adults are rather nondescript. The labial palp is upturned. The head, thorax, and forewings are brownish to fuscous overall, with fine brown or black specks and streaks. The forewing fold has light yellow scales between two grayish-black spots. A third spot is sometimes evident on males just posterior to the second, and all are readily evident when a resting moth is viewed from above. One of two grayish lines are usually evident in the cilia. The hindwing is gray and has a hair-pencil from the base of the costa in males. The abdomen is gray with two lateral hair-pencils near the apex in males.

DISTRIBUTION: *Phthorimaea operculella* is native to South America, but has become established worldwide where potatoes and other solanaceous plants are grown. It is found throughout the US where potatoes, tobacco, and other crop plants are grown. In North Carolina it is mostly found in the eastern half of the state.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults are active nearly year-round in Florida and California, and from March through October at more northern locales.

HABITAT: This species is mostly confined to croplands in the eastern part of the state.

FOOD: *Phthorimaea operculella* is polyphagous on members of the Solanaceae (Rondon, 2010). It mostly exploits commercial crops, including potatoes, tobacco, tomatoes, peppers and eggplants, but also uses non-commercial species such as European Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), Field Groundcherry (*Physalis mollis*), and Jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*).

OBSERVATION\_METHODS: Most records are from infected potatoes or from adults collected in pheromone traps.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SNR

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

COMMENTS: This is an introduced, commercial pest that does not merit protection.