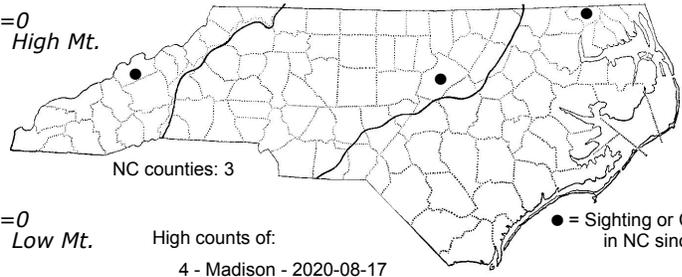
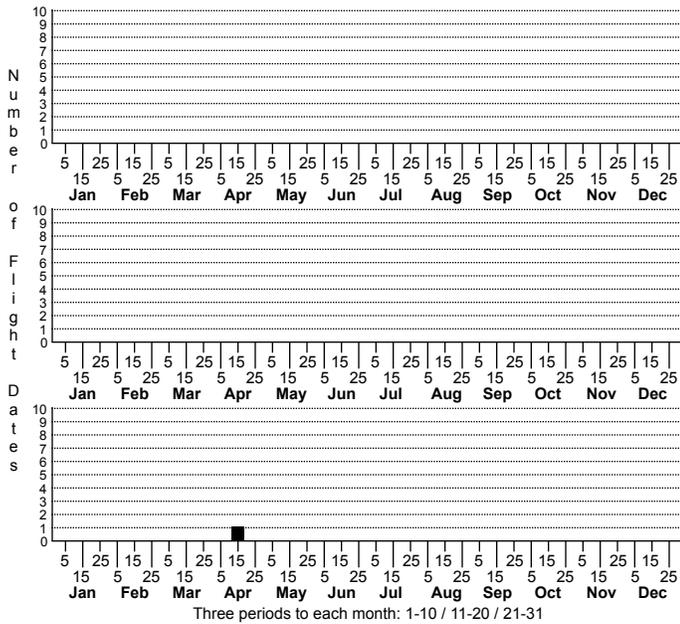
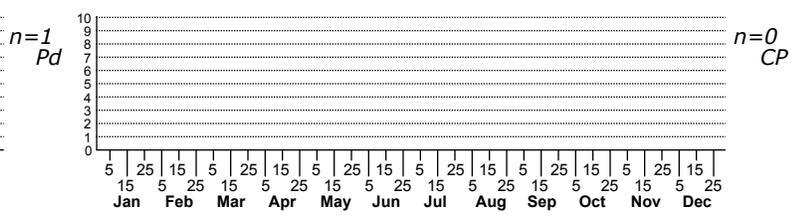


Helcystogramma melantherella None



High counts of:
 4 - Madison - 2020-08-17
 2 - Gates - 2025-07-22
 1 - Wake - 2020-04-19

Status		Rank	
NC	US	NC	Global



FAMILY: Gelechiidae SUBFAMILY: Dichomeridinae TRIBE:
 TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Hodges (1986)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Busck (1900)

ID COMMENTS: *Helcystogramma melantherella* is a small grayish-orange to purplish-brown moth that varies in coloration and patterning. Specimens typically have two blackish spots and a short streak that are edged with white scales on the forewing, along with a line of seven or eight diffuse dark brown spots along the outer margin that are edged posteriorly with paler scales. The following detailed description is based on that of Busck (1900) and Hodges (1986).

The labial palp is long, recurved and finely-tapered, with the tip reaching to the back of the head. The second segment is thickened with appressed brown to orangish-brown scales, while the third segment is as long as the second and dark-brown with the extreme tip yellow. The antenna is brown and weakly annulated, and about three-fifths the length of the forewing. The face, head, and forewing are unicolorous, but specimens can vary in their overall color, from uniformly grayish-brown or dark purplish-brown, to grayish-red or light-orange (Busck, 1900; Hodges, 1986).

The primary marks on the forewing are two blackish spots and a short streak that are edged with white scales. Just before the middle of the wing, and near the dorsal margin, there is a short black streak that is edged anteriorly and posteriorly with a few white scales. Costal to this, and at the posterior end of the streak, there is a small round black dot that is slightly edged posteriorly with white. A similar dot with white edging is posterior to and aligned with the first at around three-fifths the wing length. Most specimens have a rather weakly-developed, outwardly angulated, narrow, pale fascia at the apical fourth that terminates in a yellowish costal spot. A line of seven or eight diffuse dark-brown spots that are edged posteriorly with pale scales is also usually evident that extend along the outer margin around the apex. The fringe is light grayish-brown, and the hindwing brown to grayish-brown with a slightly lighter fringe that has a narrow pale line at the base. The legs are various shades of orangish-brown or fuscous and are not strongly banded.

Hodges (1986) noted that specimens can vary markedly in their coloration and patterning. The black spots and streak are usually evident, but sometimes subdued, with only the white scales being prominent. The forewings can vary from being nearly uniformly grayish brown or brownish-orangish to being heavily blotched with orangish and brown marks. The genitalia are distinctive and questionable specimens may need to be dissected.

DISTRIBUTION: *Helcystogramma melantherella* is found in the southeastern US, with the range encompassing areas that are mostly south and west of the Carolinas. The range extends from Florida westward along the Gulf Coast to central Texas, and northward to eastern Oklahoma, Arkansas, northern Alabama, western Tennessee, western Kentucky and southern Illinois. Since 2020, specimens have been documented in North Carolina from all three physiographic provinces, which expands the known range substantially eastward.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been observed during every month of the year except January, with southern populations presumably producing several broods per year. As of 2025, we have one adult record from mid-April and two larval records from late-July and mid-August.

HABITAT: Our few records as of 2025 are from disturbed sites with ragweeds.

FOOD: The larvae primarily use composites (Heppner, 2003; iNaturalist), but there is one record of them using Peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*; Heppner, 2003). The reported hosts include Giant Ragweed (*A. trifida*), Straggler daisy (*Calyptocarpus vialis*), Artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*), Sumpweed (*Iva annua*), Snow Squarestem (*Melanthera nivea*) and Rough Cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*). In North Carolina as of 2025, we have a feeding record for Common Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) and Giant Ragweed.

OBSERVATION_METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS:

STATE PROTECTION:

COMMENTS: