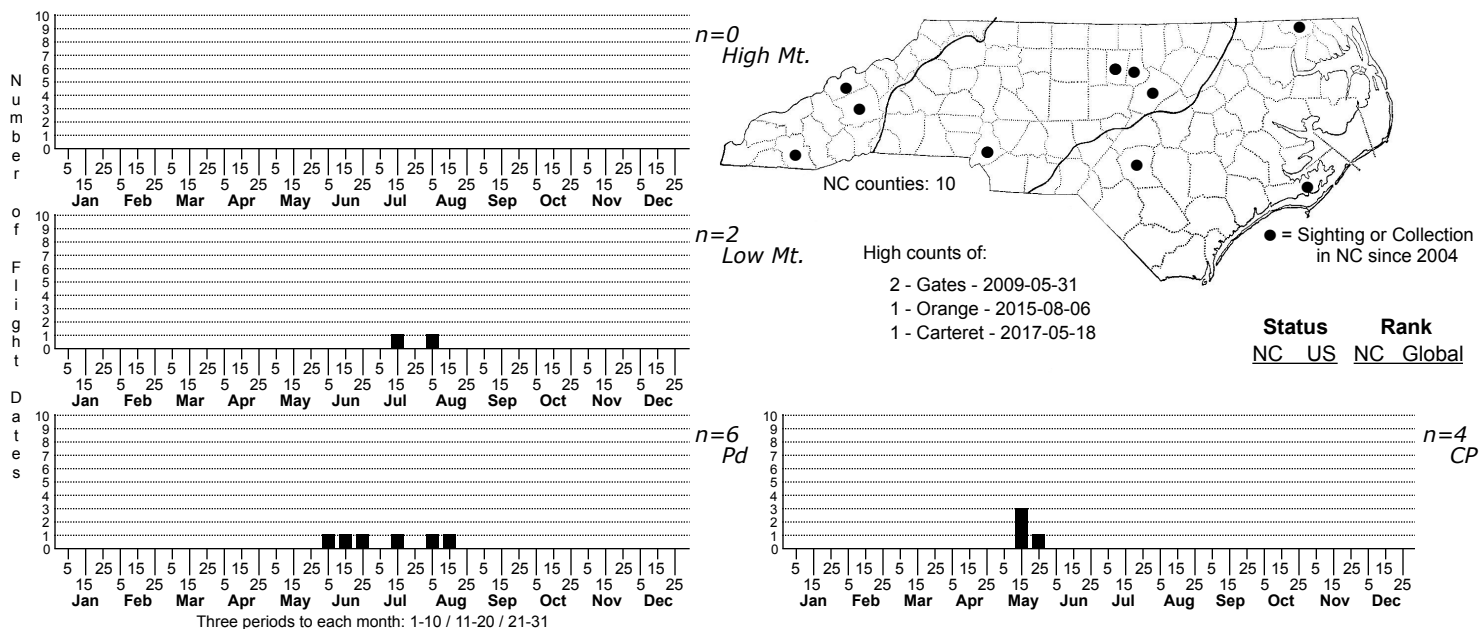


Eichlinia cucurbitae Squash Vine Borer Moth



FAMILY: Sesiidae SUBFAMILY: Sesiinae TRIBE: Melittiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of roughly 130 members of Sesiidae to occur north of Mexico, 30 of which have been recorded in North Carolina. Of six species of *Melittia*, this is the only one found the eastern U.S. Perhaps the most familiar member of the family, especially to those who tend vegetable gardens, where it can be a destructive pest. Members of this family closely mimic wasps or hornets in both appearance and behavior.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Eichlin and Duckworth (1988)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: This species is among the most easily identifiable members of the family. The thorax and forewings are a matching, opaque gunmetal gray or dark grayish-green; the hindwings (hidden at rest) are hyaline. On males, abdominal segments 1 and 2 are dark, matching the color of the forewings, on females, the dark coloration is limited to segment 1 and variously segments 3 and 4 (Eichlin & Duckworth, 1988). The remaining segments are reddish orange, most bearing a single dark spot on the dorsum. The hindlegs of *cucurbitae* are largely reddish orange and bear long, hair-like tufts which give them a noticeable and distinctively shaggy appearance. Length from tip of head to apex of forewing at rest averages 14 mm (n = 1).

DISTRIBUTION: Please refer to the dot map.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Across its range prefers gardens and other open spaces where host and nectar plants are found.

FOOD: Larvae feed on the Cucurbitaceae, especially cultivated squashes, pumpkins, and gourds (Kariuki & Gillet-Kaufman, 2014). In North Carolina, a larva has been recorded boring in the stem of a zucchini squash (*Cucurbita pepo*).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Most likely to be observed on sunny days in and around vegetable gardens, but the species also visits flowers to take nectar. As is the case with other sesiids, the male of the species shows a strong responsiveness to artificial chemical lures (Eichlin & Duckworth, 1988).

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS:

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

COMMENTS: This species is common across North Carolina. Like other sesiids, though, it is generally inconspicuous and at best only uncommonly encountered.