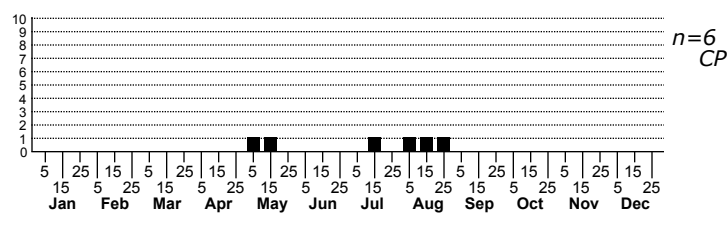
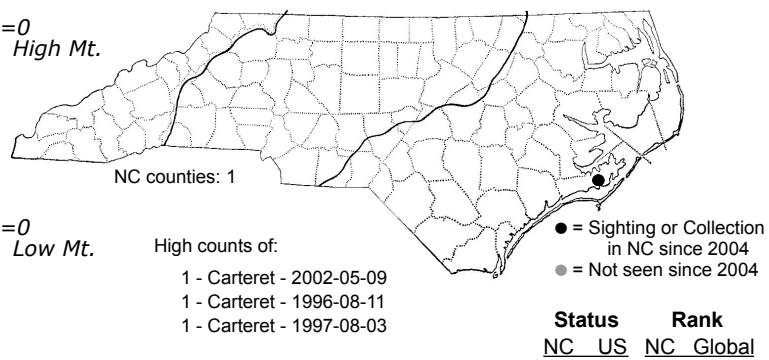


Epiblema praesumptiosa Presumed Epiblema Moth



FAMILY: Tortricidae SUBFAMILY: Olethreutinae TRIBE: Eucosmini

TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Wright and Gilligan (2023) examined specimens from Texas to North Carolina and documented geographic variation in maculation and the degree to which the marks are expressed. They recognized three major groups that included Texas populations, a cluster of Gulf Coast and southern Atlantic coast populations that ranged from Louisiana to Georgia and South Carolina, and coastal North Carolina populations. The genitalia of all were essentially identical and they elected to treat these as a single species. DNA barcoding would help to clarify the taxonomic status of these three groups.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Wright and Gilligan (2023)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: The following description mostly is based on those of Heinrich (1923) and Wright and Gilligan (2023) from specimens from Texas, including the type series. The palps, face, head, and antennae are white to grayish white. The third segment of the labial palp has a conspicuous black mark on its dorsal surface, a whitish ventral surface and a whitish tip. The second segment is white, with one or two small blackish spots or smudges on the lateral surface, while the first segment is white and often with a small black dot on the lateral surface. The antenna has a whitish to grayish-white scape and a black spot on the pedicel. The thorax and forewing are white with a faint, even, dusting of pale fuscous that produces a uniformly pale grayish tan to grayish white appearance, and often with barely perceptible brownish transverse reticulations. The only dark marks on the forewing are a small, brown, sub-basal spot near the middle of the wing and at about one-third the wing length, a small brown spot at the proximal margin of the ocellus, and an oblique blackish dash at the apex that accentuates the distal margin of strigula 9. The costal strigulae other than number 9 are short, whitish, and inconspicuous. The ocellus is whitish with a central black dot and a similar black dot at the upper margin. The cilia are concolorous with the wing, and the hindwing is more-or-less concolorous with the forewing.

Wright and Gilligan (2023) noted that individuals from Gulf Coast populations are more strongly marked. Compared to the typical phenotype from Texas, the forewing is slightly darker and has transverse reticulations that are a little more conspicuous, resulting in a slightly mottled forewing appearance. The sub-basal mark is more strongly expressed, with the cubital spot larger and with an associated spot on the inner margin, with the two sometimes connected. Individuals in North Carolina deviate by having a sub-basal mark that is sometimes barely discernable (but often well-developed), and in the form of a faint brown shade that extends from the inner margin to the cell. Its distal margin is sometimes accentuated by dark brown edging. The interfascial areas often have a mixture of whitish and pale brownish-gray patches that produce a blotchy effect. The head markings resemble those of the typical phenotype, except that the antenna lacks a black spot on the pedicel.

DISTRIBUTION: *Epiblema praesumptiosa* occurs in coastal habitats from eastern Texas eastward to Georgia and Florida, and northward to North Carolina. As of 2024, our records are all from coastal habitats in the central portion of the Coastal Plain.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been collected from the end of February to late-October in different areas of the range (Wright and Gilligan, 2023). As of 2024, we have specimens from early-May through late-August. Populations in North Carolina appear to be bivoltine, with the first flight around May and the second in July and August.

HABITAT: This species is commonly found in open, coastal maritime habitats and other xeric, sandy habitats. Some of the reported habitats include sand dunes, shell middens, maritime dry grasslands, coastal sandhills, and on land adjoining a brackish marsh (Wright and Gilligan, 2023).

FOOD: The hosts are apparently undocumented.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

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: