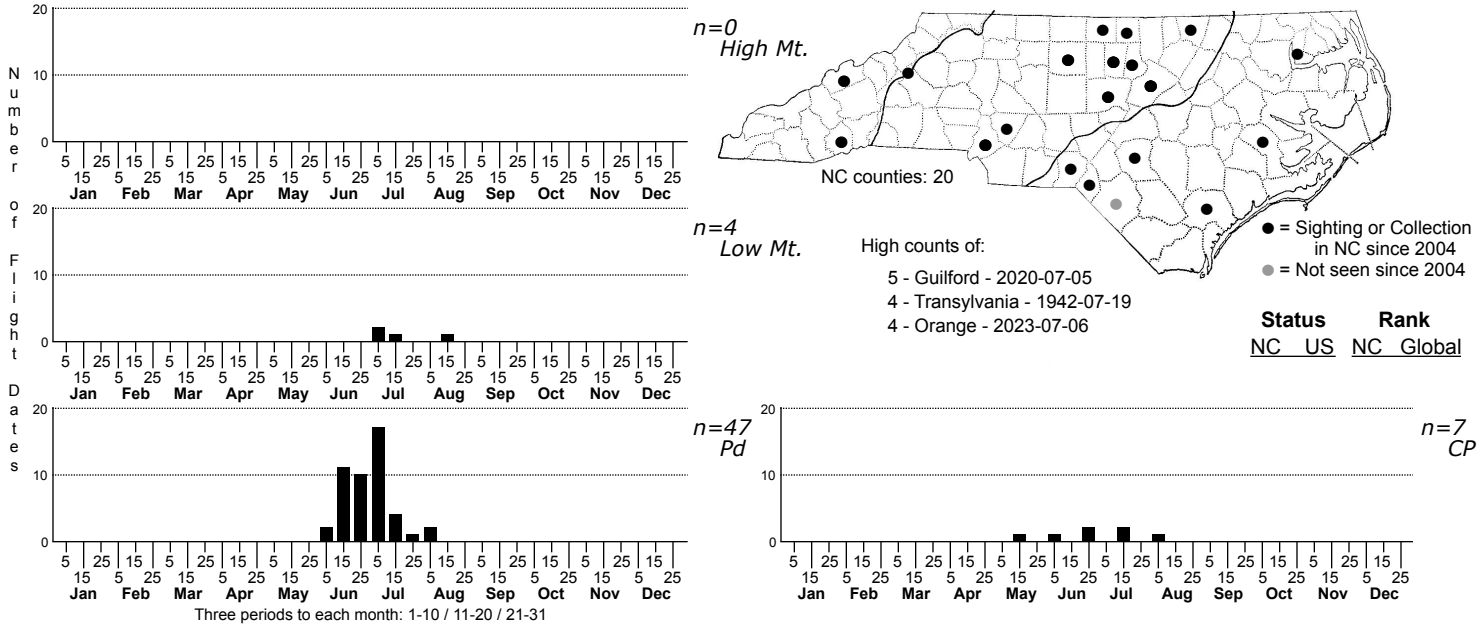
Acrolophus texanella Texas Grass Tubeworm Moth



FAMILY: Tineidae SUBFAMILY: [Acrolophinae] TRIBE: [Acrolophini]
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: The genus Acrolophus is a mostly neotropical taxon with over 250 described species, including 54 that are currently recognized in North America. The labial palps on the males of many species are very elongated and densely hairy. The larvae of some species live in silk-lined burrows in the ground and feed on the roots and young shoots of grasses and herbs. However, the life histories of most species remain undocumented and in need of study. Members of this genus were previously placed in their own family (Acrolophidae), but they are now treated as a subgroup within the Tineidae based on molecular phylogenetic studies.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle (2018)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Hasbrouck (1964)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: This is a small to medium-sized Acrolophus that is varies substantially in size and patterning across its range. The labial palp of the male overarching the entire thorax, and is densely covered with long, hair-like, dark brown scales. Similar scaling occurs on the head, thorax, and the upper legs of fresh specimens. The vestiture in the head region is generally darker than the forewings. The antenna is brown to yellowish and projects well beyond the tips of the male's palps. The forewing is brownish and often heavily tinged with grayish to light grayish brown scales. A broad, dark, oblique band or triangular blotch is often present that extends from the costa at about two-thirds the wing length towards the anal angle. This is often better develop in females, and may fill much of the apical third of the wing. A large dark blotch is often present anterior to this at about one-half and just below the inner margin. Some individuals lack both marks, with any spotting or blotching indistinct or missing. The hindwing is fuscous-gray. Examination of the eyes and antennae are helpful in identifying questionable specimens. This species has setose eyes and distinctive unipectinate antennae, with each antennal segment completely encircled by a ring of scales. Females have short palps that project forward, and the dark coloration on the apical third of the forewing is often more pronounced.

DISTRIBUTION: Acrolophus texanella is found in the central and eastern United States from central Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois, eastward to the Atlantic Seaboard from Florida to Maryland. As of 2020, we have records from all three physiographic provinces. This species is common in the Piedmont, and relatively uncommon in the Coastal Plain and mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults fly from March through December in Florida and May through October in other areas outside of North Carolina. As of 2020, our records from mid-May through early August. Populations appear to be univoltine in all regions of the state.

HABITAT: The preferred habitats are poorly documented. This species seems to do well in disturbed habitats such as residential neighborhoods and other urban environments.

FOOD: Heppner (2003) list 'grass' as the host plant, but does not provide specifics. It is uncertain if this is based on direct observations, or is merely a general statement for a group whose members often feed on grasses.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SU

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

COMMENTS: We currently do not have sufficient information on the habitat requirements and abundance of this species to assess its conservation status.