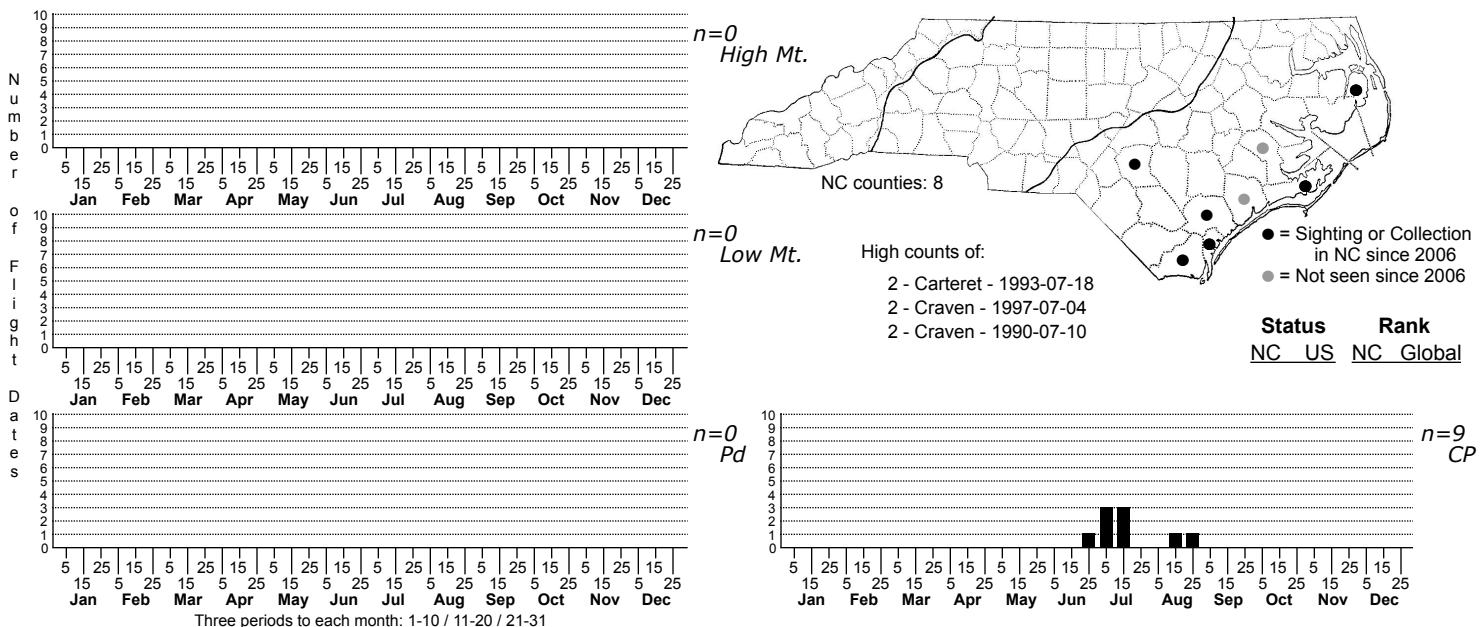


Oiketicus abbotii Abbot's Bagworm Moth



FAMILY: Psychidae SUBFAMILY: Oiketicinae TRIBE: [Oiketicini]

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The family Psychidae contains as many as 1,350 species that are found worldwide. The females of many species are flightless, and the larvae of all species live in constructed cases or bags, hence the name bagworms. *< i>Oiketicus< /i>* is a small genus with around 14 recognized species that are mostly found in the Americas. Three species occur in the US.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle (2018)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Davis (1964)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Davis (1964)

ID COMMENTS: This is a distinctive species that is difficult to confuse with others. The wings of the males are elongate and uniformly scaled, and the forewing is mostly light brown in the anterior half, and contrastingly dark fuscous on the distal half. The lower margin of the dark apical area is straight and terminates before reaching the inner margin. There is a white-edged black patch in the median area, and a dark basal streak near the inner margin that extends to about one-fifth the wing length. The vestiture of the head, thorax, and abdomen varies from light brown to fuscous. The antenna usually has 28-32 segments, and the outer two-fifths are strongly biserrate to serrate (Davis, 1964). The wingless females are 24-30 mm long and live in large cases that are 60-70 mm long and 13-20 mm wide. The general appearance of the case depends on the particular host plant and substances used for construction (Davis, 1964). When small twigs are incorporated into the structure, these are placed transversally in a circular pattern around the case, and silk is rarely used externally. A thin sheet of grayish silk may be present when on acacias, and the sacks are often largely bare when on mangroves. On oaks, the bags are usually heavily covered with projecting leaf fragments. The bags of this species are easily confused with those of *< i>Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis< /i>*, but the patterning on the head and thoracic plates of the larvae is distinctive for both species.

DISTRIBUTION: *< i>Oiketicus abbotii< /i>* is found in the southeastern US from North Carolina south to Florida, and westward along the Gulf Coast states to eastern Texas. As of 2024, all of our records are from counties along the coast.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Local populations appear to be single brooded. Brou (2018) observed adults from April through October in Louisiana, with a peak in seasonal activity from mid-July through mid-September. As of 2024, all of our adult records are from late-June through mid-July.

HABITAT: The larvae are polyphagous and can be found in a variety of forested and non-forested communities that range from mangrove thickets to dry scrub. In North Carolina, most of our records are from hydric sites such as rich savannas and wetlands with emergent vegetation.

FOOD: The larvae use a wide variety of hosts, including both conifers and hardwoods. Heppner (2003) listed over 45 genera that are used in Florida and Davis (1964) list numerous taxa based on specimen records. Examples of some of the genera that are used include *< i>Cupressus< /i>*, *< i>Juniperus< /i>*, *< i>Pinus< /i>*, *< i>Acer< /i>*, *< i>Acacia< /i>*, *< i>Aesculus< /i>*, *< i>Annona< /i>*, *< i>Bobinia< /i>*, *< i>Celtis< /i>*, *< i>Cornus< /i>*, *< i>Liquidambar< /i>*, *< i>Lonicera< /i>*, *< i>Morella< /i>*, *< i>Quercus< /i>*, *< i>Platanus< /i>*, *< i>Rhizophora< /i>*, *< i>Rosa< /i>*, *< i>Salix< /i>*, *< i>Smilax< /i>* and *< i>Solanum< /i>*.

OBSERVATION METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights and the bags are easily spotted on vegetation. The larvae should be carefully checked to verify that they are not those of *< i>Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis< /i>*, but the cases of the two species are rather distinctive.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR [S2S3]

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

COMMENTS: This species occurs regularly in rich savannas and other wetland habitats.