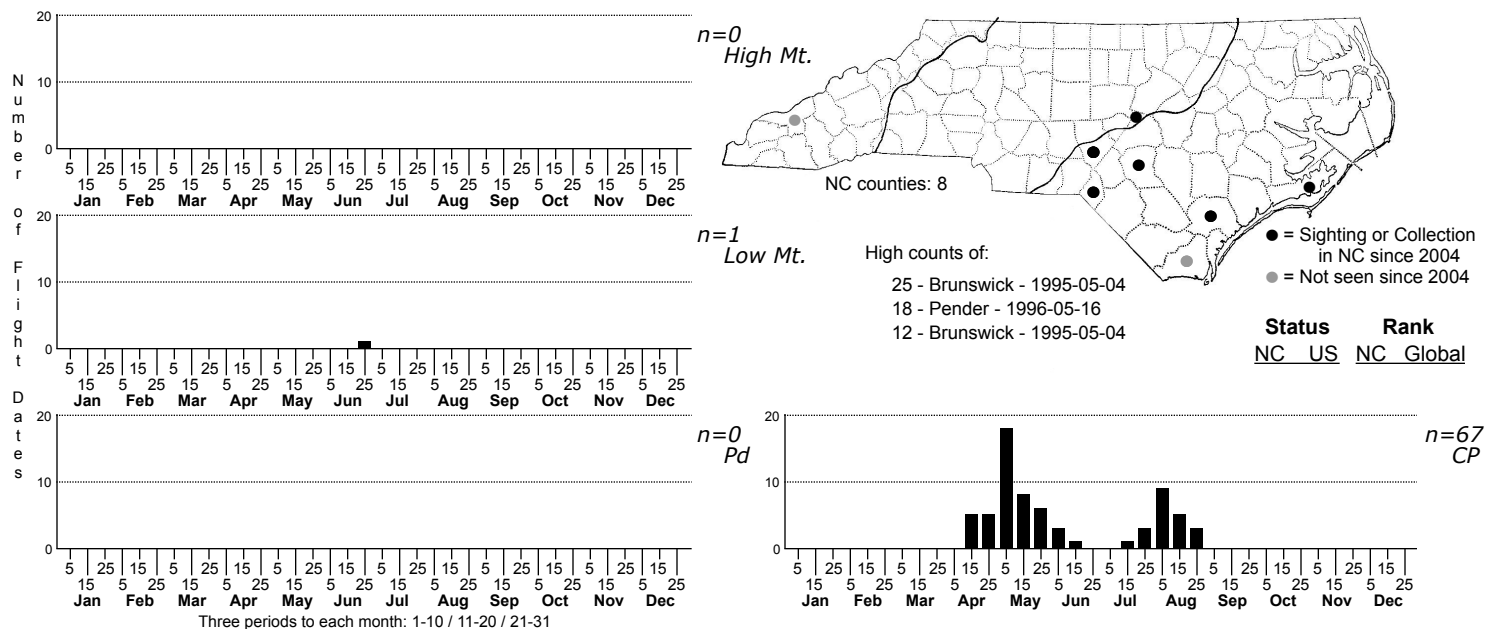


## *Megalopyge pyxidifera* Yellow Flannel Moth



FAMILY: Megalopygidae SUBFAMILY: TRIBE:

TAXONOMIC\_COMMENTS: This is one of four members of this genus in North America, two of which occur in North Carolina. This species has a long history of being placed back and forth between the genus *Megalopyge* and *Lagoa*. Becker (1995) was the last to reinstate *Megalopyge*.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (2005)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: This species is similar in size and shape to *Megalopyge crispata* but the wings, body, legs, and antennae are entirely pale to amber yellow with no markings. The broad forewings possess wavy hairs across the basal half that imparts a distinctive wrinkled or "woolly" appearance, although the uniformity of the coloration makes this feature less obvious than on *M. crispata* and *M. opercularis*. The males have prominent pectinate antennae that are about two-thirds as long as the forewing.

DISTRIBUTION: *Megalopyge pyxidifera* is mostly restricted to Coastal Plain habitats in the southeastern US. The range extends from southeastern North Carolina to southern Florida, and westward to southern Mississippi and southeastern Louisiana. Except for one record from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park that needs to be confirmed, all North Carolina records come from the southern half of the Coastal Plain, including the Fall-line Sandhills.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been observed year-round in Florida and from March through September elsewhere. Populations in North Carolina are bivoltine. As of 2023, our records are from mid-April through early June, followed by a second flight from mid-July through late-August.

HABITAT: Except for the record from the Blue Ridge, all of our records come from Longleaf Pine habitats. The majority are from dry sandhills, although there are also some from more mesic flatwoods and savannas, usually with drier habitats located in the vicinity.

FOOD: The larvae appear to be polyphagous (Heppner, 2007; Robinson et al., 2010). The known hosts include Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and other oaks, hackberries (*Celtis*), Wax-myrtle (*Morella cerifera*; iNaturalist); cherries (*Prunus*), pears (*Pyrus*) and blueberries (*Vaccinium*).

OBSERVATION\_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4G5 S2S3

STATE PROTECTION: Listed as Significantly Rare by the Natural Heritage Program. That designation, however, does not confer any legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: Although this species can be locally common, we have records from fewer than 20 sites in North Carolina. It appears to be a strong habitat specialist, occurring almost entirely in Longleaf Pine habitats, which have undergone an extreme reduction in range since Colonial settlement. Verification of the specimen from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has the potential to alter this picture, suggesting that *pyxidifera* can use a much wider range of habitats. However, more recent collecting from both the Blue Ridge and Piedmont have not produced any new records, despite the fact that this species has a fairly broad flight range in the middle of the season and appears to come quite well to blacklights.