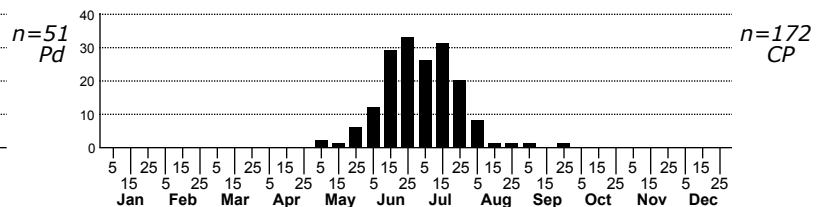
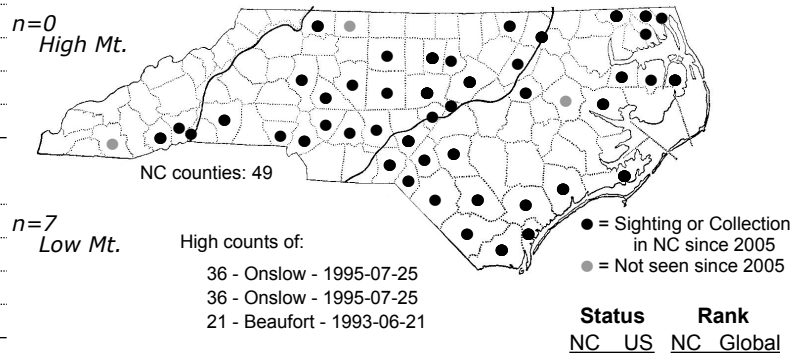
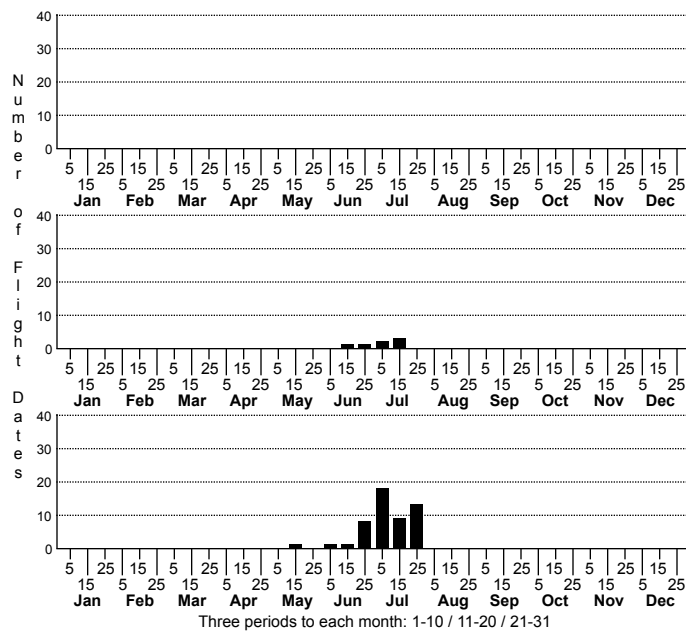


Megalopyge opercularis Southern Flannel Moth



FAMILY: Megalopygidae SUBFAMILY: TRIBE:
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1923)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: This is a heavy-bodied species with a furry head and thorax that is reddish-brown. The legs are also furry and reddish-brown, with prominent black tips. Both sexes possess a heavy, "furry", ochreous or reddish-brown body (Forbes, 1923). The broad forewing is ochreous on the basal two-thirds, and blends to pale yellow or creamy-white distally. Black smudging occurs along the basal two-thirds of the costa, and narrow, whitish, wavy rays radiating from the base. The wavy hairs across the basal half of the forewing impart a distinctive wrinkled or "woolly" appearance. This is especially obvious on the larger, typically less colorful females. *Lagoa crispata* is similar in size and shape to *M. opercularis* but the forewings are pale yellow rather than orange-brown as seen in the latter. In addition, *M. opercularis* tends to have more extensive black scaling on the tips of the legs.

DISTRIBUTION: *Megalopyge opercularis* is primarily found in the southeastern US, Central America and northern South America. In the US, the range extends from eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey southward to southern Florida, and westward to central Texas, southeastern Oklahoma, and Arkansas. In North Carolina this species is widespread and common in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont. As of 2023, we have only a few records from the Blue Ridge and all are restricted to the southern mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been observed year-round at southern localities such as Florida and Texas where there are two or more generations. Populations in the northern part of the range most commonly fly from April through September. In North Carolina, local populations are univoltine. As of 2023, our records extend from early May through late-September, with a seasonal peak in June and July.

HABITAT: We have records from a wide range of habitats in the state, including maritime forests and scrub, peatlands, Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, sandhills, and dry slopes in the Piedmont and Blue Ridge. We have fewer records for this species from bottomland hardwoods and cool, mesic forests than we have for *Lagoa crispata*, suggesting that it prefers somewhat drier to xeric habitats than that species.

FOOD: The larvae are broadly polyphagous and feed on a variety of hardwood shrubs and trees (Craighead et al., 1950; Baker, 1972; Covell, 1984; Heppner, 2007; Robinson et al., 2010). The reported hosts include Florida Maple (*Acer floridanum*), Red Maple (*A. rubrum*), birches (*Betula*), Japanese Camellia (*Camellia japonica*), Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) and other hickories, Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*), Common Hackberry (*C. occidentalis*), Citrus, American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), *Hibiscus*, Chinese Holly (*Ilex cornuta*), Japanese Holly (*I. crenata*), Yaupon Holly (*I. vomitoria*), Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), Sweetbay Magnolia (*M. virginiana*), apples (*Malus*), Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), *Pyracantha*, pears (*Pyrus*), Turkey Oak (*Quercus laevis*), Laurel Oak (*Q. laurifolia*), Water Oak (*Q. nigra*), Live Oak (*Q. virginiana*), roses (*Rosa*), Coastal Plain Willow (*Salix caroliniana*), Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parviflora*) and other elms. In North Carolina, larvae have been recorded feeding on maple (*Acer* sp.), Box-elder (*Acer negundo*), American Persimmon, Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*), Live Oak, and Winged Elm (*Ulmus alata*).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The species readily comes to lights. The adults have reduced mouthparts and presumably do not feed on flowers or sap.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 [S5]

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

COMMENTS: *Megalopyge opercularis* occurs widely across the state, occupying a broad range of habitats, and utilizing a large set of host plants, including many that are common. Consequently, this species appears to be quite secure in North Carolina