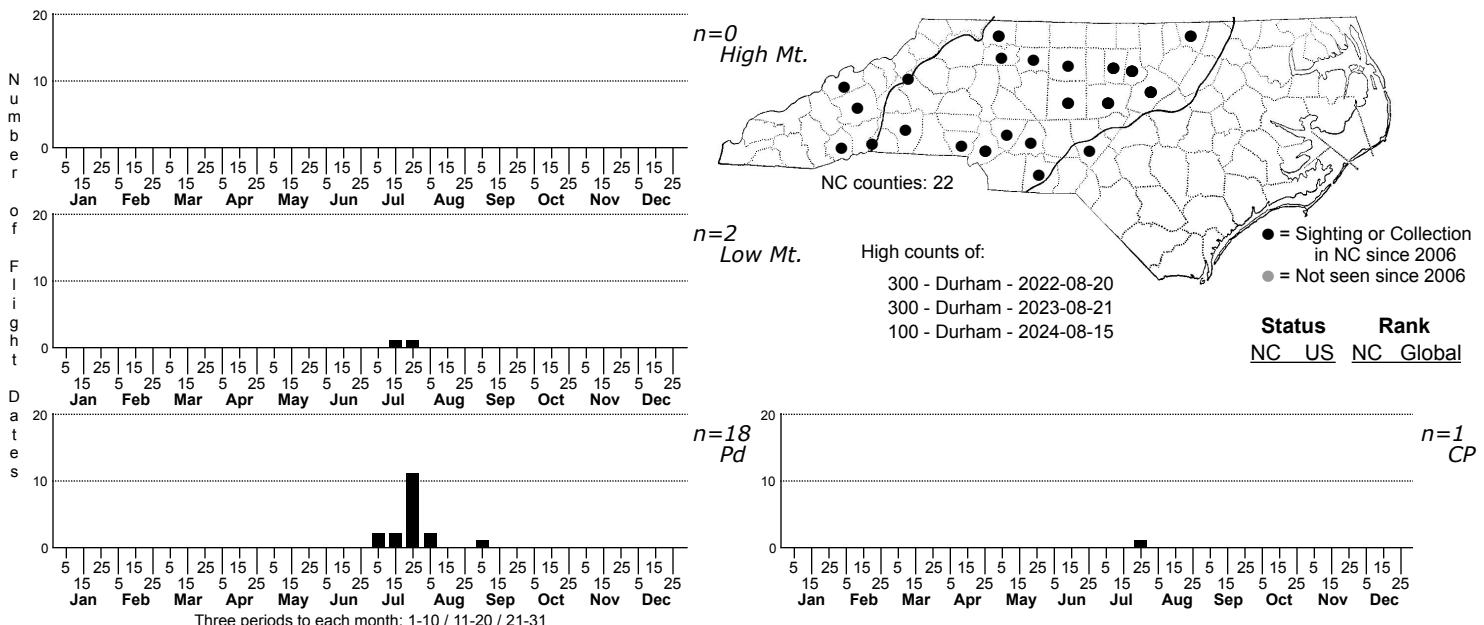


Norape cretata White Flannel Moth



FAMILY: Megalopygidae SUBFAMILY: TRIBE:

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of three members of this genus in North America and the only eastern representative.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1923)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Hyche (2002); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: *Norape cretata* is smaller than other flannel moths and slimmer in build. The forewing, hindwing, body, palps, and legs are satiny-white, and the base of the forewing and head have tufts of long, white, silky hairs. The body is stout and hairy, and the wings are rounded. The male's antenna is broadly pectinate and orangish. If not examined closely, *N. ovina* could easily be passed off as *Hyphantria cunea* or any of several species of the unmarked forms of *Spilosoma*. It can be separated from those species by the proportionally shorter and rounder wings, the long, straight hairs that protrude upward from the thorax, and the orange, pectinate antennae.

DISTRIBUTION: *Norape cretata* is mostly restricted to the southeastern US where specimens have been found from Maryland southward to southern Florida, and westward to eastern Texas, eastern Oklahoma, Arkansas, southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois, southern Indiana and southern Ohio. Populations appear to be absent or rare in the Atlantic Coastal Plain between Virginia and northern Florida. As of 2023, our records are mostly from the Piedmont, with a few records from lower elevations in the Blue Ridge.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been observed from March through October in different areas of the range, with most flying between June and September. Local populations appear to have one broad per year in most areas of the range, with perhaps two broods per year in the southernmost populations in Florida. Local populations in North Carolina are univoltine. As of 2023, all of our records are from early-July through early-August.

HABITAT: This species prefers wooded to open habitats, particularly those that support Eastern Redbud. Most of our records are from residential areas, with a few from more natural, forested sites.

FOOD: Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) appears to be the most important host, but several other species are also used (Forbes, 1923; Hyche, 2002; Wagner 2005; Heppner, 2007). The other reported host include Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), hackberries (*Celtis*), Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), greenbriar (*Smilax*), and elms (*Ulmus*). In North Carolina, we have several records for larvae feeding on Eastern Redbud and one on Honey Locust. Larvae feed communally in large numbers and David George has recorded hundreds defoliating redbuds in an urban park in Durham. He also noted a few larvae eating an American Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) that was adjacent to the redbuds. Most likely, they were only using this secondary host after the preferred host had been defoliated.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Almost all of our adult records come from the use of blacklights (one from building lights), but very few from traps as opposed to sheets. This suggests that it may settle fairly quickly once drawn into a light source and may be significantly undersampled where traps are used alone. Adults of this family have reduced mouth parts and probably do not feed; consequently, we have no records from bait or flowers. The larvae are commonly seen on Eastern Redbud and occasionally on other host plants.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 [S3S4]

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

COMMENTS: *Norape cretata* can be locally abundant in the Piedmont where Eastern Redbud is present and appears to be secure within the state.