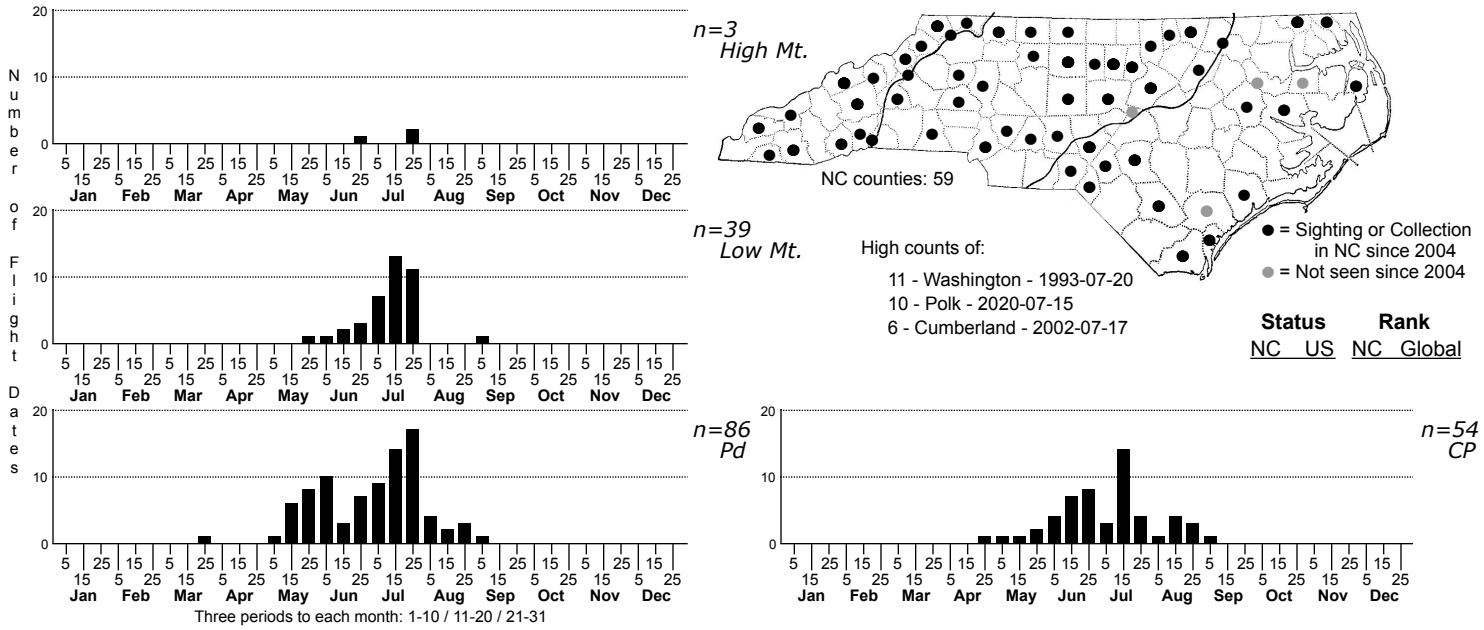
Prolimacodes badia Skiff Moth



FAMILY: Limacodidae SUBFAMILY: TRIBE:
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Prolimacodes badia is one of only two members of the genus that occur in North America, and the only one that occurs in the eastern U.S. Synonymies include Limacodes scapha and Prolimacodes scapha.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1923)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Dyar (1896); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: This species is distinctively patterned with a sharply bicolored forewing. The head, palps, antennae, and thorax are light brown, with the latter having a dark brown tuft at its posterior end. The forewing has chocolate brown coloration that extends along the costa from the wing base, then rapidly expands at about one-fourth to form a broadly rounded mark. The mark extends inward to about two-thirds the wing depth before gradually tapering to the apex. The remaining portion of the forewing is light brown to smoky gray-brown, and blends diffusely into a cream, white, or silver border where it meets the chocolate brown patterning. A prominent thoracic hump that is triangular at the rear gives the moth a "front heavy" appearance. It does not rest with the abdomen curled up above the wings as seen in some limacodids.

DISTRIBUTION: Prolimacodes badia is broadly distributed across the eastern US and in adjoining areas of Ontario and Quebec. In the US the range extends from Maine southward to southern Florida, and westward to central Texas, central Oklahoma, eastern Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota. This species occurs statewide in North Carolina, from the barrier islands to higher elevations in the Blue Ridge.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults fly year-round in Florida, with progressively shorter flight periods as one moves northward. Adults in the northern areas of the range mostly fly from May through August, with a peak in June and July. As of 2023, our records extend from late April through early September. Local populations in North Carolina appear to be univoltine.

HABITAT: Our records come a wide variety of hardwood habitats, including bottomland forests, xeric sandhill communities, dry ridges, and cove forests. We also have numerous records from semi-wooded residential neighborhoods.

FOOD: This species feeds on deciduous trees and shrubs and is broadly polyphagous (Prentice, 1966; Wagner, 2005; Heppner, 2007; Robinson et al., 2010). The reported hosts include Red Maple (Acer rubrum), Sugar Maple (A. saccharum), birches (Betula), hickories (Carya), American Chestnut (Castanea dentata), Sweet Chestnut (C. sativa), Citrus, hawthorns (Crataegus), American Beech (Fagus grandifolia), Witch-hazels (Hamamelis), Common Winterberry (Ilex verticillata), Black Walnut (Juglans nigra), Sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua), Sweetbay Magnolia (Magnolia virginiana), Northern Bayberry (Morella pensylvanica), Sweet-gale (Myrica gale), Blackgum (Nyssa sylvatica), American Hop-hornbeam (Ostrya virginiana), American Sycamore (Platanus occidentalis), Carolina Laurel Cherry (Prunus caroliniana), Black Cherry (P. serotina), Choke Cherry (P. virginiana), Laurel Oak (Quercus laurifolia), Northern Red Oak (Q. rubra), Live Oak (Q. virginiana), rhododendrons (Rhododendron), roses (Rosa), willows (Salix), American Basswood (Tilia americana), elms (Ulmus) and blueberries (Vaccineum).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Readily attracted to lights but not to bait or flowers.

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: Prolimacodes badia occurs commonly across the state, occupies a wide range of habitats, and utilizes a broad range of host plants, many of which are common species. Consequently, this species appears to be secure in North Carolina.