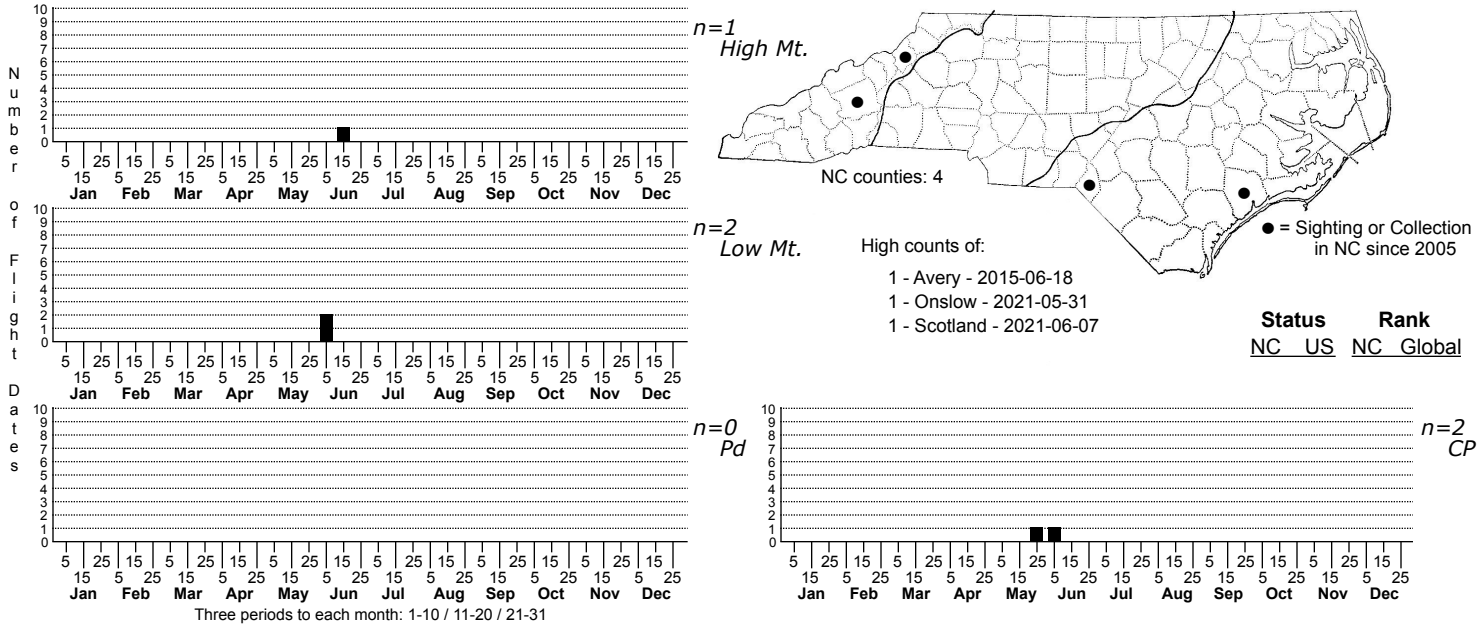
Bucculatrix montana Mountain Bucculatrix



FAMILY: Bucculatricidae SUBFAMILY: [Bucculatriginae] TRIBE: [Bucculatrigini]
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Bucculatrix is a large genus of small leaf-mining moths, with around 300 species worldwide. A total of 103 Nearctic species have been described, and many others will likely be described in the future. Braun (1963) covered 99 species in her monograph, and four additional Nearctic species have been described since then.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Braun (1949, p. 41)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: This is a small white moth (large for the genus) with ocherous, tan, or sometimes dark brown streaks. The following description is based on Braun (1963). The head is white, with a few fuscous hairs in the whitish tuft. The antenna stalk is pale fuscous. The thorax and ground color of the forewing is white. The forewing is marked with ocherous, is more or less fuscous dusted, and sometimes has dark fuscous streaks. A longitudinal streak usually is present, running from the base of the wing along the midline to the cell. In darker specimens it may join the apices of the three costal streaks. There are three equally spaced, posteriorly oblique, fuscous costal streaks. The first begins just before the middle of the costa and bends towards the middle of the wing to join the end of the second costal streak. The second streak runs into some fuscous dusting on the termen that is connected to the third streak, which may appear more as a fuscous blotch. Just beyond the the middle of the inner margin, there is a curved fuscous streak that bends back along the fold and often joins the ends of the first and second costal streak. From the termen just before the apex, there is a distinctive streak of blackish fuscous scales that extends to the tip of the apical cilia. The cilia are whitish, except just below the apical fuscous line. A fine line of scattered dark-tipped scales in the terminal cilia meets the fuscous apical line at a very acute angle at about half its length. The hindwing is pale fuscous, and darker in the males, especially in dark-marked specimens. The legs are pale ocherous, and the hind tarsal segments are tipped with fuscous, except in the palest specimens. Braun (1963) notes that the most distinguishing character of B. montana is the blackish streak extending in a line with the longitudinal axis of the wing from near the apex of the wing to the tip of the apical cilia. Many Bucculatrix are best identified by genitalia and we consider our records for B. montana based on images as being provisional. Bucculatrix solidaginiella is very similar, but the angle between the blackish streak and the line of blackish scales on the cilia is more acute.

DISTRIBUTION: Bucculatrix montana is primarily found in the northeastern US and adjoining areas of Canada, with scattered records farther south and west. Braun (1963) has records for Nova Scotia, Ontario, Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Virginia, and Georgia. MPG and BugGuide have additional state records from Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota and Tennessee. As of 2022, we have a few scattered records from throughout the state.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults fly in June, July, and August in areas outside of North Carolina.

HABITAT:

FOOD: The hosts appear to be undocumented. Beadle and Leckie (2012) state that Sweet Gale (Myrica gale) is used, but we are unaware of the source for this statement. Sweet Gale is an extreme disjunct in the Southern Appalachians and is currently known from just one site in North Carolina (Weakley, 2015) that does not correspond to our moth records.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SNR [S1S3]

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

COMMENTS: This species is poorly known in general, without any information on its host plants or habitats. It appears to be scarce in the Southeast, and we have just a few records as of 2022. Far more needs to be known about its distribution, host plants, and habitat associations before we can assess its conservation status.