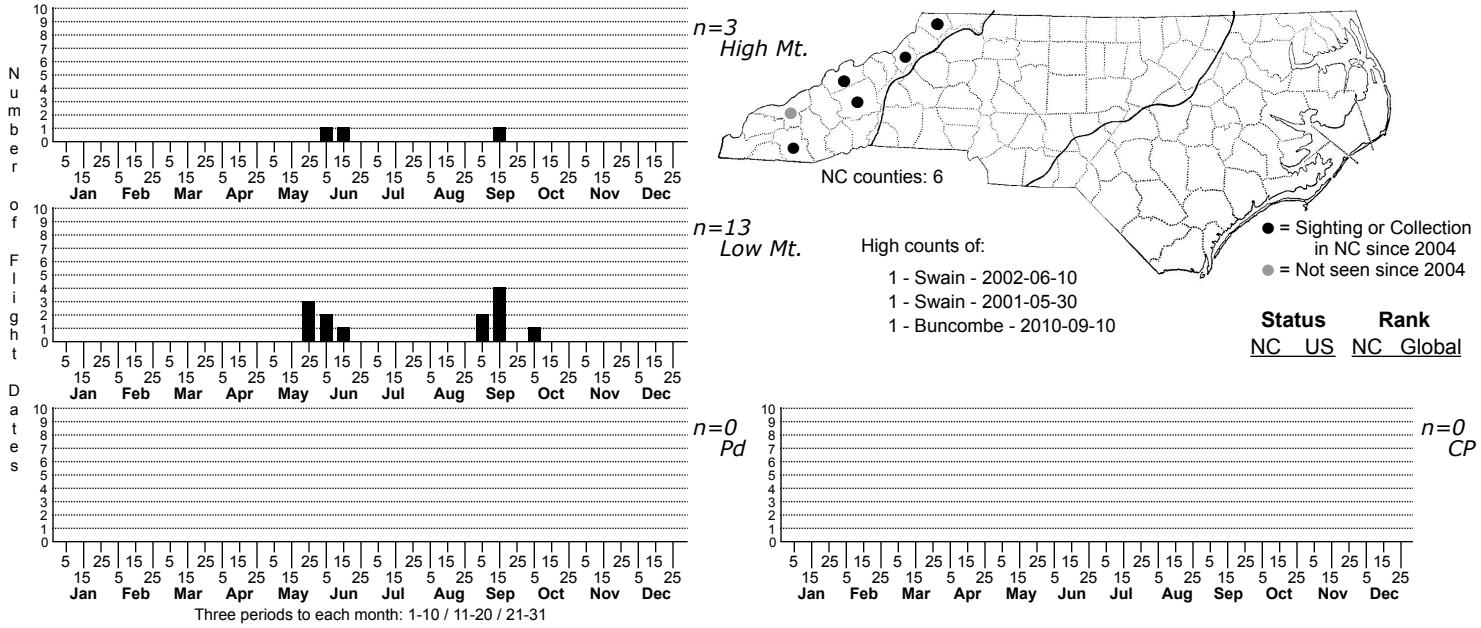
Evergestis pallidata Purple-backed Cabbageworm Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Evergestinae TRIBE: [Evergestini]
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Munroe (1973)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: This is an easily distinguished species with a distinctive mark in the subcostal region near the middle of the wing that resembles an hourglass or tied knot. The following description is based on that of Munroe (1973). The forewing is straw yellow and lightly dusted with fuscous. The fuscous medial and postmedial lines are fine but distinct and both run obliquely outward from the costa then bend and project obliquely inward to the inner margin. The medial line is interrupted by a ringlike mark in the end of cell. Immediately adjacent to this distally is an hourglass-shaped mark. Many specimens have a third similar line that runs parallel to the other two near the base, but this is often absent. The terminal area has a brownish patch of variable width and intensity that contains a clear straw-yellow patch just before the margin. There is a fine dark terminal line, and the fringe is straw-yellow and variegated with brown. The hindwings are very pale straw-colored with faint violaceous iridescence and are darker towards the anal margin. The terminal margin and part of the fringe are dark tinged and there is a weak, broken, fuscous postmedial line.

DISTRIBUTION: Evergestis pallidata in native to Eurasia and was introduced to North America from Europe sometime between 1850-1900 (Capinera, 2002). It has since spread throughout many of the northern latitudes, including much of southern Canada. In the eastern US it occurs from the New England states southward to western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, and westward to Kentucky, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. Populations are also established in the Pacific Northwest and in several states in the Rocky Mountains region. As of 2023, all of our records are from the Blue Ridge.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults have been collected from May through December in North America, with a seasonal peak in June through September. Populations in North Carolina appear to be bivoltine, with adults first emerging in May and June, then again in September and early August.

HABITAT: Local populations can be found where cultivated plants are grown, but also in natural habitats such as mesic forests where Cardamine and other members of the mustard family likely serve as hosts.

FOOD: The larvae feed on various members of the mustard family (Brassicaceae), and can occasionally be a significant pest in home gardens or commercial operations. They feed on both native and cultivated species (Munroe, 1973), including Horseradish (Armoracia rusticana), Chinese Cabbage (Brassica campestris), Cabbage (B. oleracea), Turnip (Brassica rapa</ i>), wintercresses (Barbarea spp.), bittercresses (Cardamine spp.), Radish (Raphanus sativus) and charlocks (< i>Sinapis spp.).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights and the larvae can be found on the foliage of the host plants.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR[SNA]

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

COMMENTS: This is an introduced species and does not merit protection.