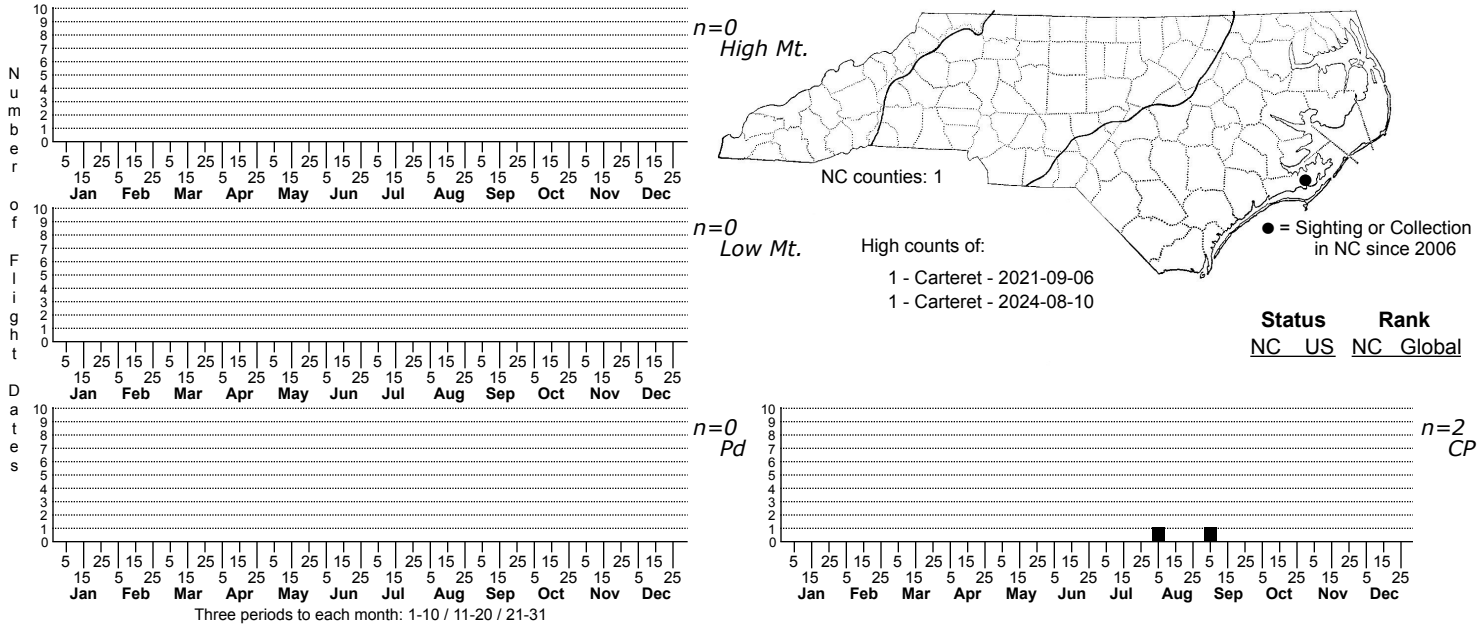
Pyrausta phoenicealis Phoenicean Pyrausta



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Pyraustinae TRIBE: Pyraustini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Pyrausta phoenicealis (Hübner, 1818) has been confused and synonymized with P. panopealis in some publications prior to Munroe (1976), who removed it from synonymy based on small differences between the two (see Landry, 2015). Maes (2014) synonymized P. panopealis again after being unable to find any diagnostic feature to separate the two. Here, we only recognize P. phoenicealis as a valid species.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Munroe (1976)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: This is a distinctively marked species that has contrasting, irregular bands on the outer two-thirds of the forewing. The basal third of the forewing can vary from yellowish-buff to dark reddish-brown. The area beyond the antemedial line consists of large, irregular, alternating regions of lighter and darker patterning. The antemedial line is followed by a light zone that is often contracted in the middle, while the postmedial line separates a darker zone basally from a lighter zone apically. A dark zone or band is present in the subterminal area. The coloration of the hindwing is generally similar, with the outer half having dark subterminal and medial bands that are separated by a lighter-colored band.

DISTRIBUTION: Pyrausta phoenicealis and P. panopealis are two very similar forms, with the latest treatment combining these into a single species (P. phoenicealis; see taxonomic comment above). P. phoenicealis is an agricultural pest and has been introduced to many parts of the world, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions. Munroe (1976) believed that it is native to the southeastern U.S., but this has yet to be firmly established. In the U.S. it occurs from southern Indiana, southern Ohio and Kentucky southward to Alabama and southern Florida, and eastward to Georgia, South Carolina and coastal North Carolina. As of 2023, we have a single record of this species from Carteret Co. along the coast.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults fly year-round in Florida and from April through August at more northern latitudes. As of 2023, our one record for the state is from early September.

HABITAT: Local populations are commonly found in greenhouse operations and cultivated fields, as well as natural habitats. In the U.S,. many records are from xeric habitats in the southeastern Coastal Plain, including our one record for North Carolina.

FOOD: The larvae are polyphagous (Munroe, 1976; Eisner, 1990; Robinson et al., 2010; Aguiar-Menezes et al., 2021). Given that this species has a worldwide distribution, it undoubtedly use dozens of host plants. Aguiar-Menezes et al. (2021) listed host species from the Asteraceae, Fabaceae, Lamiaceae, Malvaceae, Nyctaginaceae, Poaceae, Rosaceae and Sapindaceae. Some of the reported hosts that are relevant to the U.S. include Scrub Mint (Dicerandra frutescens), Elephant's-foot (Elephantopus sp.), Cotton (Gossypium), Common Sunflower (Helianthus annuus), Field Mint (Mentha arvensis), Bee-sage (Mesosphaerum rugosum), Sweet Basil (Ocimum basilicum), rice (Oryza sp.), and Beefsteak-plant (Perilla frutescens).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR SU

STATE PROTECTION:

COMMENTS: This species is found world-wide in tropical and subtropical regions. Its status in North Carolina in undetermined and needs additional study.