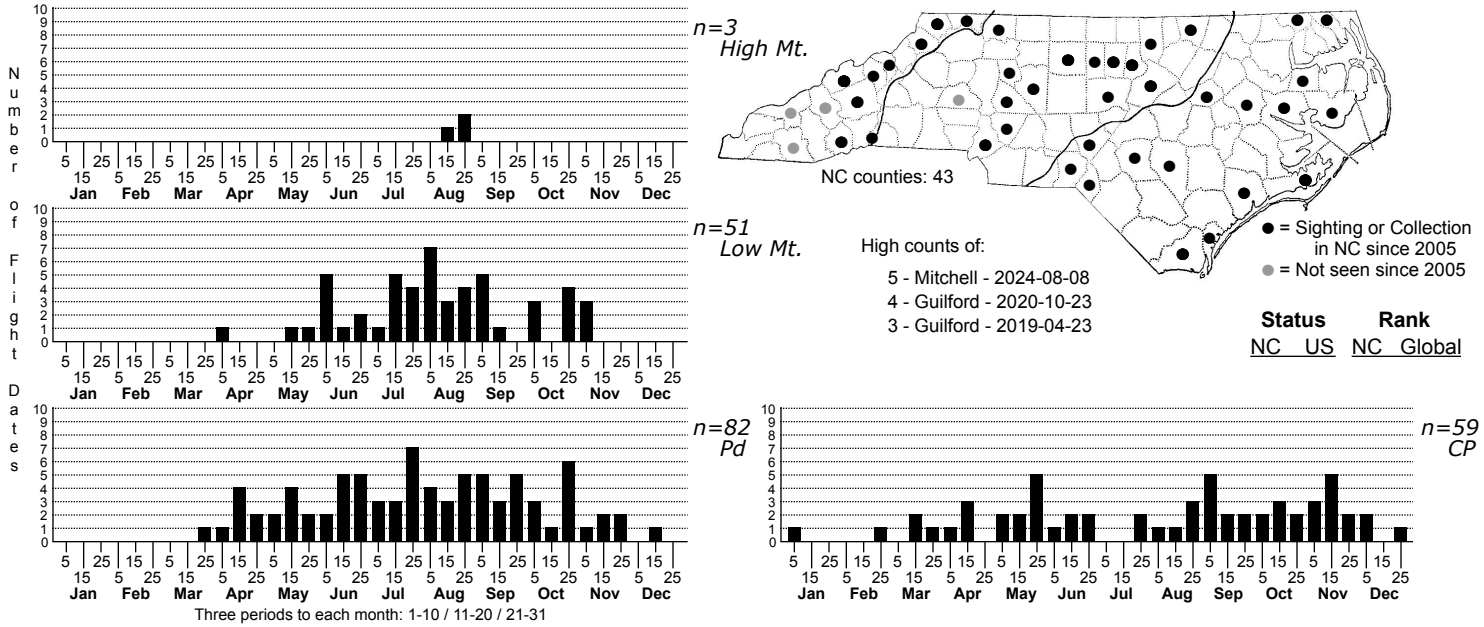
Nomophila nearctica Lucerne Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Pyraustinae TRIBE: Spilomelini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Munroe (1973)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: MacKay (1972)

ID COMMENTS: This species is readily identified by its spot pattern and the long, narrow forewings that are held close to the body when at rest. The following description is mostly based on the description by Forbes (1923). The forewing is over two and one-half times as long as wide, while the outer margin is less than half as long as the inner margin. The forewing ground has a mixture of dull white, tan and light brown scales, with the darker colors usually predominating to produce an overall brown ground color. The orbicular, reniform and claviform spots are all large, dark brown, and outlined with black. The reniform spot is often bilobed, while the orbicular and claviform spots are oval and either slightly separated or weakly joined together. The postmedial line is finely dentate when distinct, and the subterminal space is finely strigose with a feather-like patterning. The costa is unmarked except for three dark spots in the subapical area, and the terminal line is represented as a line of seven dark spots. The hindwing is light brown to grayish-brown and unmarked.

DISTRIBUTION: Nomophila nearctica is a very wide-ranging species that has been documented in every state in the conterminous U.S., as well as Alaska and southern Canada from British Columbia to Prince Edward Island. It also is found in Mexico and the West Indies (Munroe, 1973). This species occurs statewide in North Carolina.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults are active year-round in southern localities such as Florida, California, and Texas, and mostly from April through October at more northern latitudes. It is also found from Mexico to the Neotropics. As of 2023, our records extend from late-February through late-December. Populations in North Carolina appear to be multivoltine with overlapping generations.

HABITAT: This species is commonly found in open habitats that support grasses, forbs, and cultivated crops, including pastures, roadsides, croplands, powerline corridors, fencerows and residential neighborhoods.

FOOD: The larvae are polyphagous and feed on a variety of grasses, forbs, and cultivated crops (Smith, 1942; Covell, 1984; Heppner, 2007; Solis, 2008; Robinson et al., 2010; Beadle and Leckie, 2012). Agricultural crops that are eaten include several grasses such as oats (< i>Avena sativa), Kentucky Bluegrass (Poa pratensis) and corn (Zea mays), as well as pasture grasses, soybeans, alfalfa, celery, and clovers (Trifolium spp.). Other taxa that are used include Sugarcane Plumegrass (Erianthus giganteus), White Sweetclover (Melilotus albus), Yellow Sweetclover (M. officinalis), Prostrate Knotweed (Polygonum aviculare), Rose-moss (Portulaca grandiflora), a cinquefoil (Potentilla sp.), and Charlock Mustard (Sinapsis arvensis).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR S5

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

COMMENTS: This species is common and does well in disturbed habitats and croplands. It appears to be secure within the state.