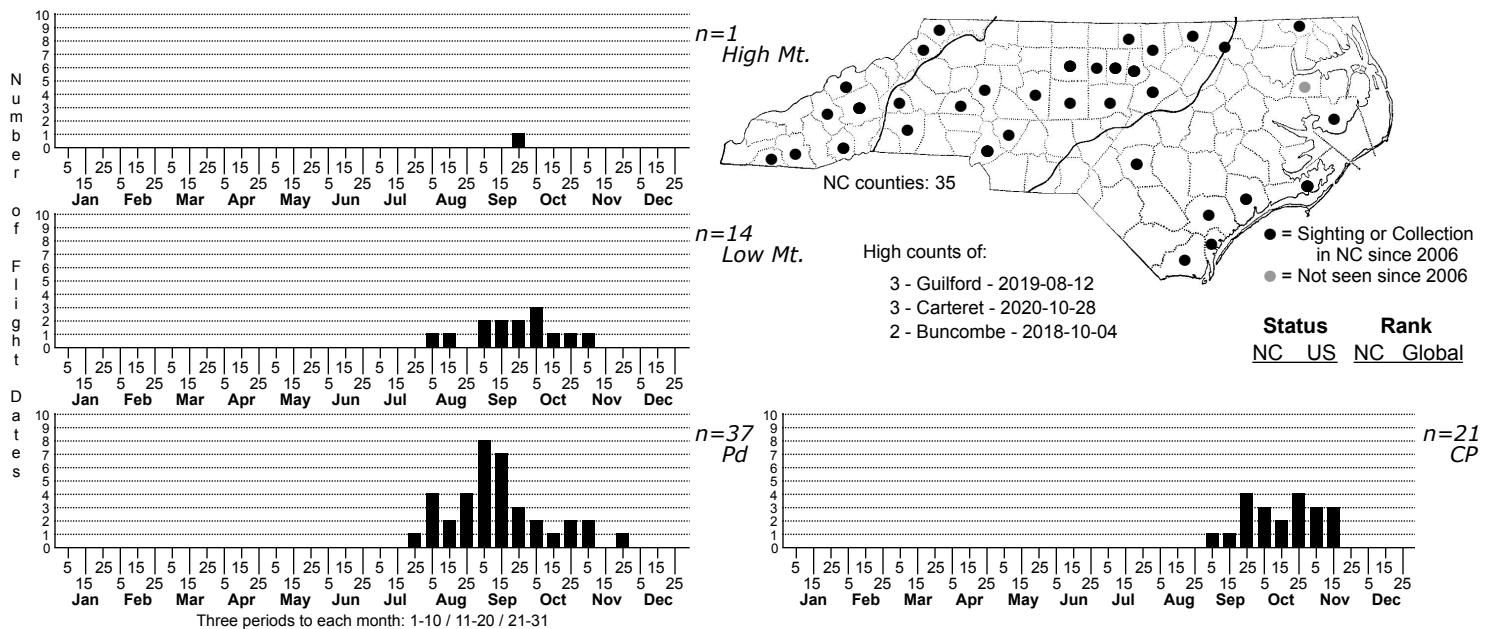


Diaphania nitidalis Pickleworm Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Pyraustinae TRIBE: Spilomelini
TAXONOMIC COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Capinera (2000)

ID COMMENTS: This species has a reddish-brown ground color on the forewing that is overlain with a large, irregular, dull-yellowish blotch that often appears semitransparent. The only other marks are two small dull-yellow dots along the inner margin at around one-fifth and three-fifths the wing length. The hindwing has the dorsal two-thirds concolorous with the forewing blotch, with a small black dot in the middle, while the outer third is reddish-brown and matches the ground color of the forewing. A prominent anal brush is present on both sexes.

DISTRIBUTION: This is a tropical species that cannot survive significant freezing winter temperatures. It overwinters successfully in southern Florida and southern Texas, then undergoes major dispersal events northward to invade much of the Southeast each summer. The moths commonly disperse as far as the New England states, and can be found statewide in North Carolina where they often become significant pests on summer squash and other cucurbit vegetables (Capinera, 2000).

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: This species is commonly found in agricultural fields and vegetable gardens where cucurbits are grown. They also are found where local patches of Creeping Cucumber are found along edge habitats.

FOOD: The larvae specialize of members of the gourd family (Cucurbitaceae), including winter and summer squashes, cucumbers, watermelon, cantaloupe, and pumpkins (Capinera 2000, Heppner, 2007; Robinson et al., 2010). Creeping Cucumber (*Melothria pendula*) is an important native species that is used, while Wild Balsam Apple (*Mormordica chorantia*) is of questionable significance. In North Carolina, Ken Kneidel reared a larva from a cucumber.

OBSERVATION METHODS:

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 subtropical species is common and widespread in North Carolina after dispersal events from Florida, but is not capable of establishing permanent breeding populations due to its freeze intolerance.