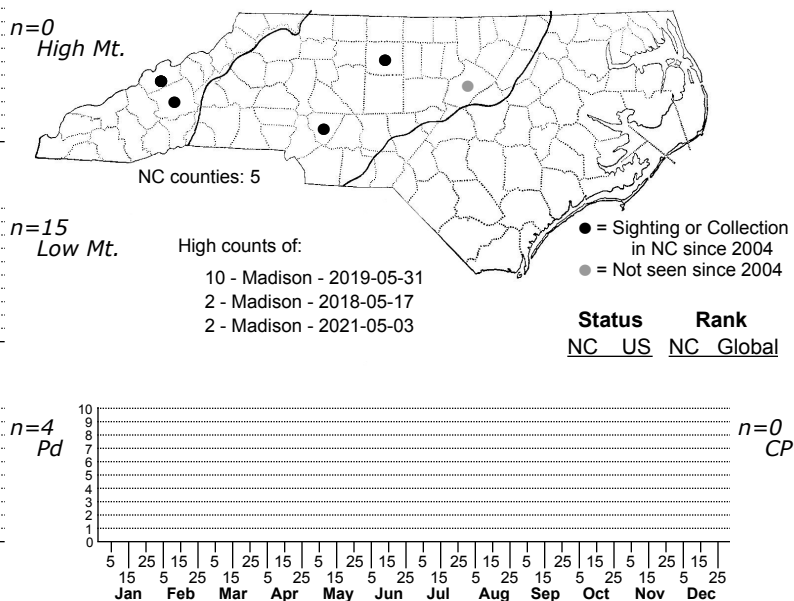
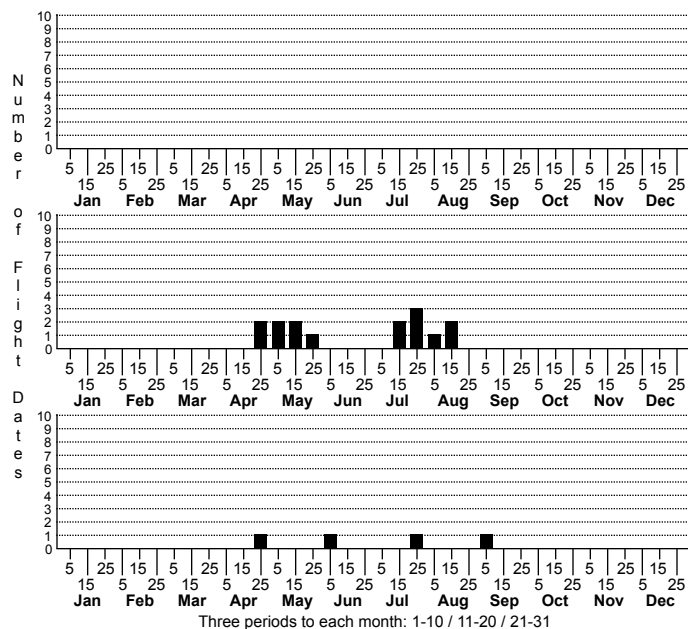


## *Palpita illibalis* Inkblot Palpita Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Pyraustinae TRIBE: Spilomelini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: This is one of twelve species in this genus that have been recorded in North America north of Mexico (Scholtens and Solis, 2015). Munroe (1952) placed *P. magniferalis* in his 'Illibalis Species Group', which in North Carolina includes *P. arsaltealis*, *P. magniferalis*, *P. freemanalis*, and *P. aenescentalis*.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Munroe (1952)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Tyler (2020)

ID COMMENTS: This is a small white and brown mottled pyraustine. The ground color of both the forewings and hindwings is typically white, and often translucent, although some individuals have a light brownish shading. The orbicular and reniform spots on the forewing are dark and solid, with the wings also speckled with dark brown. Speckling along the costa can be almost solid, but is otherwise light and concentrated in the distal half (Munroe, 1952). The hindwings are also lightly speckled and possess a distinct dico-cellular spot. The legs are white, with dorsal and distal fuscous bands on the fore tibiae. The palps are fuscous above and pale below. Schotens (2017) notes that "there is plenty of possibility for confusion in these species. There are general trends in each, but a great deal of variation."

DISTRIBUTION: The range is centered on the southeastern U.S. and extends from Pennsylvania and Ohio southward to southern Florida, and westward to eastern Texas, western Tennessee and Kentucky. As of 2023, our records are all from the Piedmont and lower elevations in the Blue Ridge.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults typically fly from March through September in different areas of the range, but also can be active during the coldest winter months in southern locales such as Florida and Louisiana. As of 2023, our records extend from late-April through mid-August. Local populations in North Carolina appear to be bivoltine.

HABITAT: This species appears to specialize on the Fringe Tree, which occurs in mesic to drier forests, particularly where there are forest edges and gaps. In drier woods it is often found along the bases of rock outcrops or on large rock ledges.

FOOD: The larvae have only been found on Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) in North Carolina and elsewhere (iNaturalist; Tyler, 2020).

OBSERVATION\_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights, and the damage to leaves is often readily evident on the host plant.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR [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 associated with the Fringe Tree in North Carolina, which is the only known host. Since that species is considered to be at high risk due the attacks of the Emerald Ash Borer, *Palpita illibalis* is likely to be highly endangered.