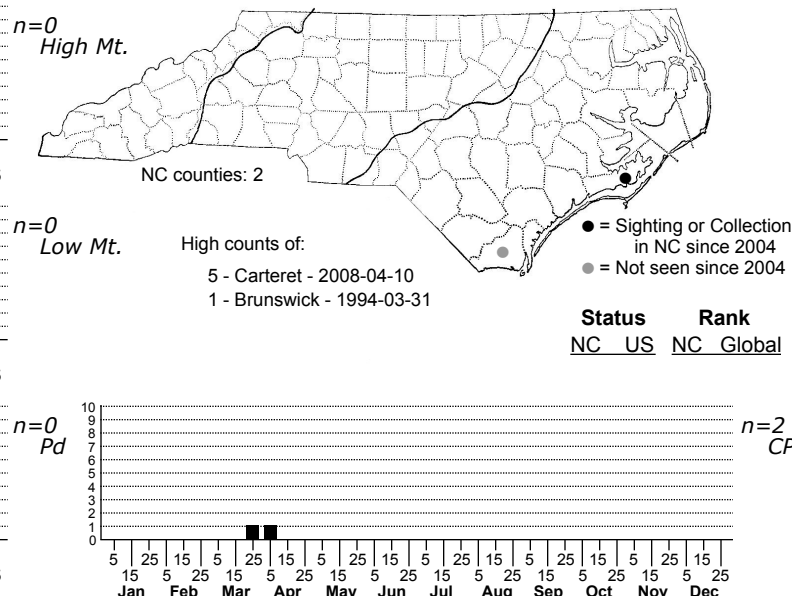
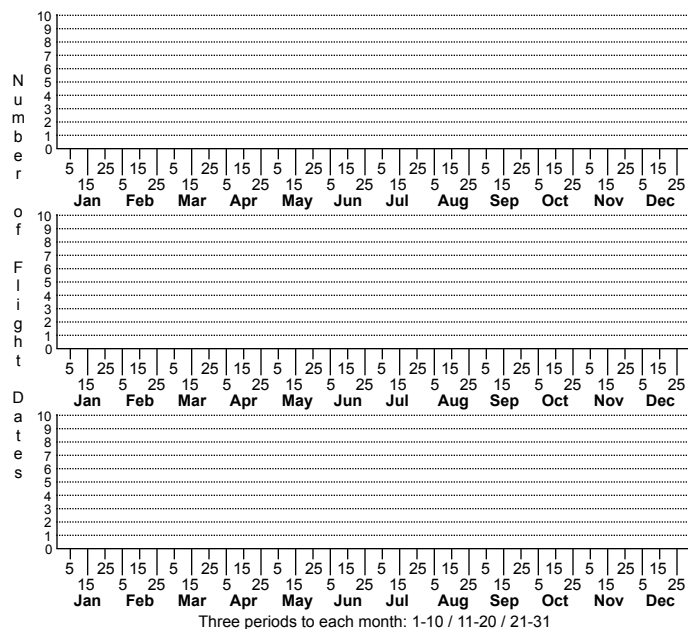


Palpita maritima Coastal Palpita Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Pyraustinae TRIBE: Spilomelini

TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: "There is plenty of possibility for confusion in these species. There are general trends in each, but a great deal of variation" (Scholtens, 2017).

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: The following description is from Sullivan and Solis (2013). The labial palps are brown above and white below, while the haustellum is white. The frons is brown with darker, chocolate-colored patches laterally, and the vertex is white centrally with brown on the sides. The antenna is brown dorsally and tan ventrally, with the scape brown and the pedicel brown with white scales at the base. The thorax is fuscous, while the first two abdominal segments have white scaling dorsally, and fuscous and chocolate scaling laterally. The remaining abdominal segments are chocolate colored dorsally with scattered fuscous scales covering most of the segment. There is also a row of white scales distally, which gives the abdomen a ringed appearance. The terminal segment is largely fuscous, and the abdomen extends one-third the length beyond the wing margins.

The forewing has a slightly rounded apex and the ground color is brown with a mixture of chocolate and fuscous scales. The orbicular and reniform spots are well-marked. The wing pattern varies depending on the degree of wear, with some individuals having well-marked chocolate-colored areas. The hindwing is fuscous and less patterned than the forewing, with a narrow, dark marginal line and a curved discal spot. The forelegs have alternating brown and white-scaled regions, while the middle legs are brown dorsally and white ventrally. The hindlegs are white. A single pair of spurs is on the mid-tibia, while there are two pairs on the hind-tibia with the smaller, distal spurs brown and the proximal spurs white. Some individuals have all of the spurs white. The females are similar to the males, but with the scaling on the leg spurs usually white with scattered brown scales.

Sullivan and Solis (2013) noted that this species cannot always be reliably distinguished from some forms of *Palpita arsaltealis* and *P. freemanalis* that are also known from eastern U.S. coastal areas, and that genitalia provide the most reliable way to distinguish among these species.

DISTRIBUTION: This seemingly rare species is only known from North Carolina, Florida and extreme southern Alabama. As of 2023, we have only two site records.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Sullivan and Solis (2013) noted that the adults are locally abundant in late March and early April in coastal maritime forests. Additional captures were made in the same habitat in June, July and August, but very few individuals were taken relative to the March-April catches.

HABITAT: Our two site records come from maritime forest habitats on barrier islands that are dominated by Live Oak, Laurel Oak, Loblolly Pine, Yaupon Holly and *Smilax* species. A record from Florida was from a Slash Pine/ palmetto flatwoods community.

FOOD: The host plants have not been confirmed but Sullivan and Solis (2013) speculated that Wild Olive (*Cartrema americanum*) is a likely choice since several other members of this genus specialize on members of the Oleaceae and *Cartrema* is a common plant in the maritime forests where *P. maritima* has been found.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

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 is a seemingly rare species that reaches its northern limits in North Carolina.