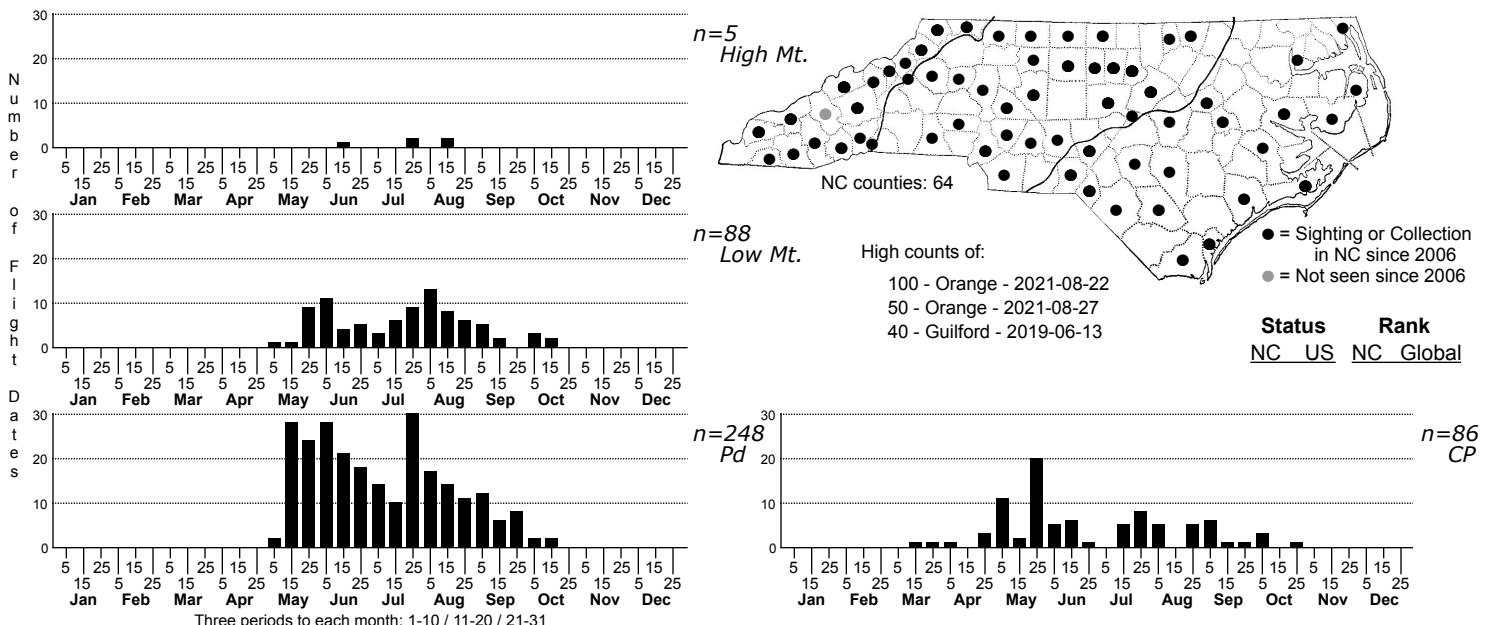


Microcrambus elegans Elegant Grass-veneer



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Crambinae TRIBE: Crambini
TAXONOMIC COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Fernald (1896); Forbes (1923).

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Allyson (1986)

ID COMMENTS: The following description is based mostly on that of Fernald (1896) and Forbes (1923). The palps are white above and slightly fuscous on the outside. The head and thorax are white with dull brown dusting. The ground color of the forewing is white and is heavily shaded with dull brown in places, particularly on the apical third of the wing before the subterminal line, along the basal two-thirds of the costa, and as a blackish-brown basal patch near the base of the wing. A wide white fascia is present at the middle of the wing that begins near the middle of the costa and extends obliquely outward for about one-fourth of its length, then angles sharply backwards and runs to the inner margin at around one-third the wing length. It often fuses with a diffuse, narrow, white streak that runs from near the middle of the wing base to the fascia. The white fascia adjoins a short, curved, diffuse, blackish streak on the dorsal half that forms a semicircular or horseshoe-shaped band when an individual is resting with the wings closed. The subterminal line is brown and slightly excurved, and is preceded by a parallel, white line that is the same width. The area between the middle white fascia and the subterminal line is heavily dusted with dull brown except for a white costal spot at around three-fourths the wing length. The subterminal area beyond the subterminal line is white, but sometimes has a light dusting of dull brown scales. The terminal line is represented as a line of seven black dots, and the fringe varies from metallic ashy-gray to light-brown. The hindwing varies from light-brown to light reddish-brown and has a lighter fringe.

<i>Microcrambus elegans</i> is often confused with <i>M. minor</i> and is best distinguished by having a costa that is white beyond the subterminal line, along a well-defined subterminal line that is bordered with an adjoining white line. In <i>M. minor</i>, the costa has a diffuse, dark-brown, apical patch that extends across the subterminal line, and a subterminal line that is diffuse and rather obscure.

DISTRIBUTION: <i>Microcrambus elegans</i> is a common species that is found in the eastern U.S. and adjoining areas of Canada. In the U.S., the range extends from Maine southward to southern Florida, and westward to central Texas, central Oklahoma, central Kansas, central Nebraska, Minnesota and northeastern Nebraska. It occurs in adjoining areas of Canada in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. This species occurs statewide in North Carolina.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults fly year-round in Florida, and mostly from May through October elsewhere in the range. In North Carolina the adults fly from mid-March through late-October in the Coastal Plain, and from early-May through mid-October elsewhere. North Carolina populations appear to produce two or three generations per year.

HABITAT: Our records come from a wide range of habitats, including residential neighborhoods, fields, xeric Sandhill communities, coastal scrub communities, alluvial forests and mesic hardwoods. Ainslie (1924) noted that populations in eastern Tennessee are almost always found in low or damp places where broadleaf species such as goldenrods and ironweed serve as resting places for the adults.

FOOD: The hosts are poorly documented. Robinson et al. (2010) reported that the larvae feed on grasses, including corn, but this may reflect earlier work by Felt (1894) who reported that the larvae feed on 'grass'. Ainslie (1916) noted that not a single species of <i>Crambus</i> or <i>Microcrambus</i> had been successfully reared to adults other than those of his own, and he was unsuccessful in getting the hatchlings of <i>M. elegans</i> to feed on grasses or other potential hosts that were provided as food. In later studies in the laboratory, Ainslie (1924) reported that the larvae readily fed on mosses and would only eat grasses as larger larvae, and only when

forced to. These observations suggest that mosses may be the primary hosts in the wild, at least during the early larval stages. Allyson (1986) was successful in raising the hatchlings to adults on corn silk rather than grasses.

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 is a secure species that is very common and found statewide.