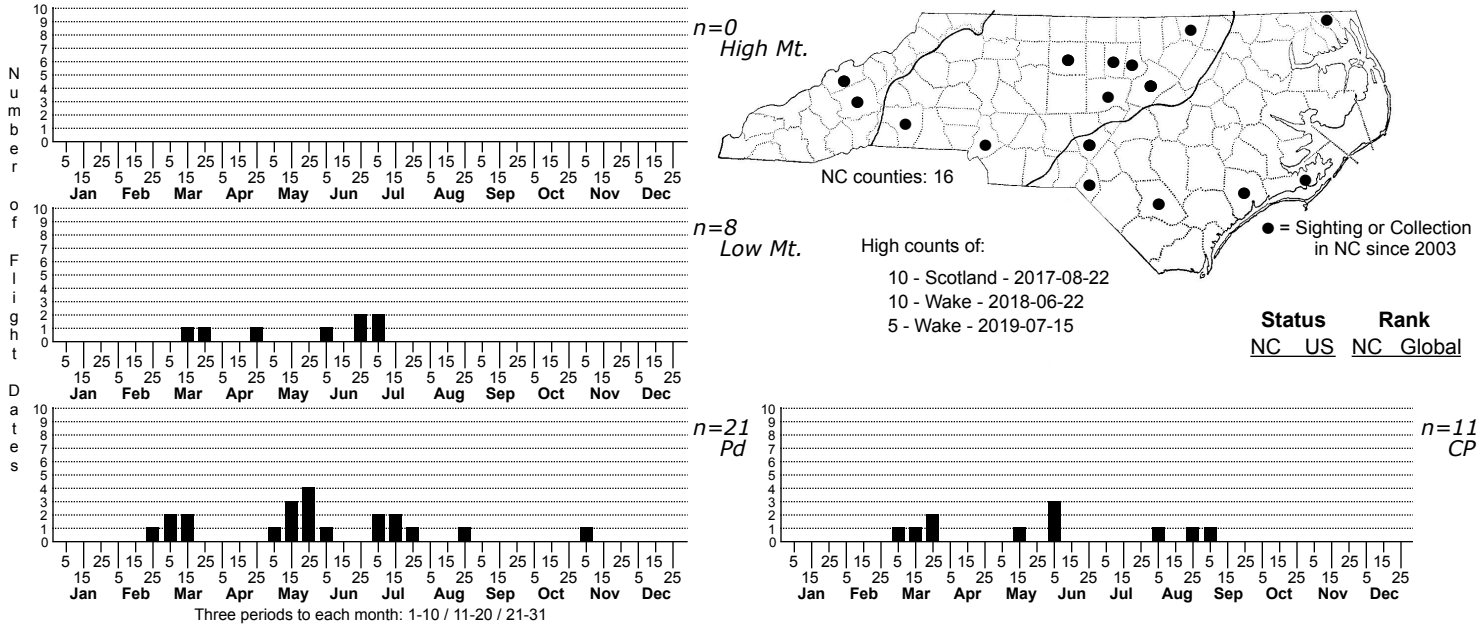
Caloptilia rhoifoliella Sumac Leafblotch Miner Moth



FAMILY: Gracillariidae SUBFAMILY: Gracillariinae TRIBE: [Gracillariini]
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Caloptilia is a large genus with nearly 300 described species; 64 species have been described in North America north of Mexico. The larvae begin as leaf-mining sap-feeders, but the latter instars usually exit the mine and feed within a conical roll that begins at the leaf apex or at the tip of a leaf lobe.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle, 2018.
ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: (Chambers, 1876)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Chambers, 1876; Eiseman, 2019.

ID COMMENTS: In this species, the upper head, thorax and forewings are light to dark brown, and often have a yellowish tinge. The area near the costa is often lighter than the ground color above, and in many specimens is whitish with darker dusting or fine mottling. A series of dark brown dots or small rectangular blotches usually occurs along the costa, and sometimes more dorsally along the fold. The triangular patch that is found in many Caloptilia is absent, and the face and palpi are white. The apex of each joint of each palp is brown. The femur and tibia of the front and middle leg are brown above, while the tarsi are whitish with faint brown marks near the joints. The rear legs are light colored with varying amounts of fuscous dusting. This species superficially resembles C. sassafrasella, but the face and palps are white, compared with the dark face and palps of C. sassafrasella. Caloptilia sassafrasella also has two conspicuous dark costal spots -- one midway and one just before the apex -- that are lacking in C. rhoifoliella.

DISTRIBUTION: C. rhoifoliella is widely distributed and common across the eastern US and adjoining areas of extreme southern Canada. Populations occur as far south as Florida and as far west as Texas and Oklahoma. This species is presumed to occur statewide based on our records for NCMO, as well as several additional records on iNaturalist and BAMONA.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults are active following the spring leaf-out. Observations from the eastern US suggest that this species may be bivoltine, with a peak in adults occurring in July and August, and a secondary peak in October. Specimens in North Carolina have been observed from early April through August (iNaturalist; BAMONA).

HABITAT: The host plants include our native sumacs, which are typically found in open, dry woods or disturbed sites such as clearings, old fields, and roadsides. The larvae also feed on Poison Ivy and Poison Oak, which are found in a variety of disturbed sites, as well as a wide range of other habitats such as dry to mesic forests.

FOOD: C. rhoifoliella specializes on species of Sumac (Rhus) and Poison Ivy and Poison Oak (Toxicodendron). The known hosts including Fragrant Sumac (R. aromatica), Winged Sumac (R. copallinum), Smooth Sumac (R. glabra), Staghorn Sumac (R. typhina), Poison Oak (T. pubescens) and Poison Ivy (T. radicans).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to UV lights, and the larvae can be documented by searching for leaf mines and shelters on the host species.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR S3S5

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

COMMENTS: