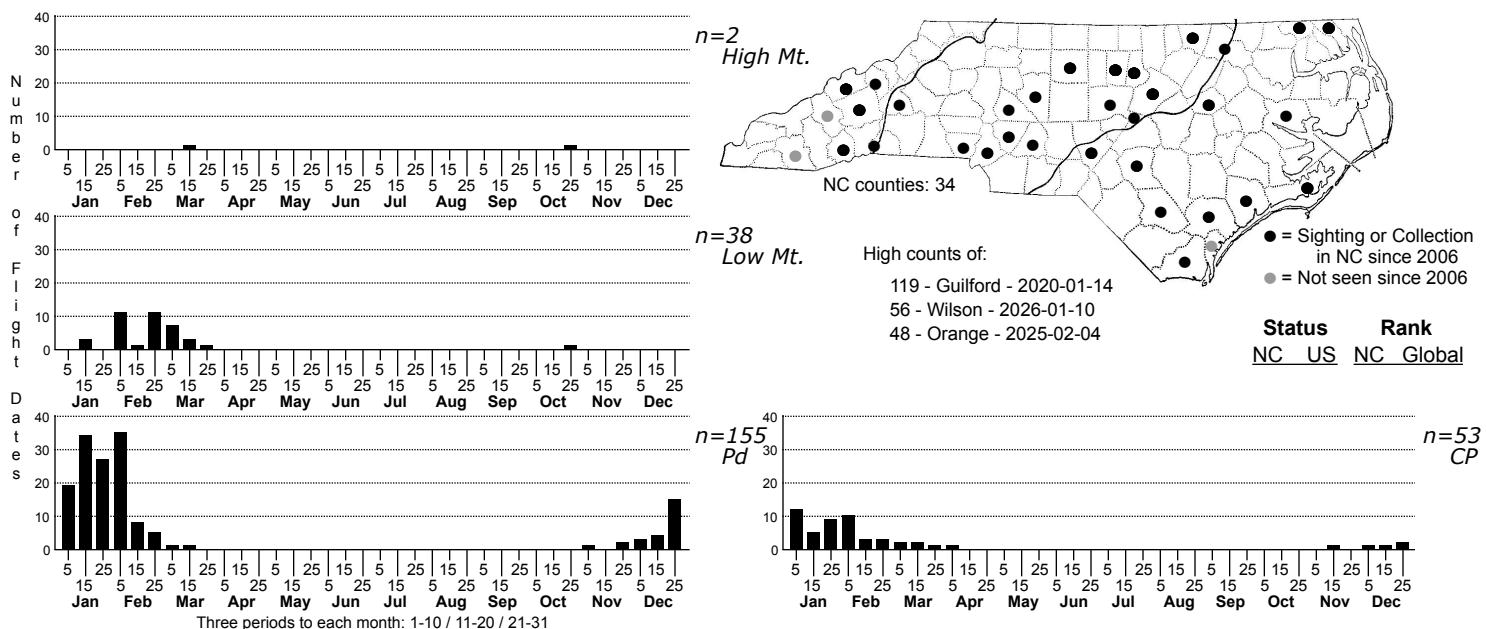


# *Phigalia denticulata* Toothed Phigalia



FAMILY: Geometridae SUBFAMILY: Ennominae TRIBE: Bistonini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of four members of this genus that occur in North America, three of which are found in North Carolina

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1948); Rindge (1975)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Wagner et al. (2001); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: Phigalia are among the very few geometrids that fly during mid-winter to early spring. They can be distinguished from Alsophila and Paleacrita, which also fly during this period and are similarly pale gray, by their blackish antemedian, median, and postmedian lines. In *Phigalia denticulata*, the ground color of the wings is grayer or browner than in the other two species, particularly in the median area. The postmedian line is strongly toothed and the portion towards the inner margin usually has a strong inward bulge coming close to or touching the median line (Rindge, 1975; Covell, 1984). *Denticulata* is generally more mottled than *Phigalia strigataria*, which also has a toothed postmedian; the lower part of the postmedian in *strigataria* is also usually straighter or less strongly bulging than in *denticulata*. Females of all three species of *Phigalia* have stubby, non-functional wings (which are virtually absent in female *Alsophila* and *Paleacrita*). Rindge (1975) describes the females as dark gray with two poorly defined spots on the thorax and a faint, black, geminate dorsal line.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs across the entire state, including both the Barrier Islands and High Mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: One flight, beginning as early as late October in the Mountains and in January in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. The first of the three *Phigalia* to fly during the year.

HABITAT: Found in peatlands, maritime scrub, and sandhills habitats in the Coastal Plain but less often in xeric longleaf habitats than *P. titea*. In the Piedmont and Mountains, our records come from mesic to dry-mesic hardwood habitats. Seen in residential neighborhoods as well as natural areas.

FOOD: Larval hosts have not been well documented, but Wagner (2005) describes the species as a general feeder. In North Carolina, J.B. Sullivan reared larvae from Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and Sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*). There is also a BugGuide record (Yurika Alexander, 2012) for a larva on Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults have short, non-functional mouthparts (Forbes, 1948); consequently, they do not come to bait or show up at flowers. They appear to come fairly well to blacklights but usually only in small numbers; our records show a maximum of 5 captured in a single trap.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4S5]

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

COMMENTS: Although more needs to be learned about the host plants used by this species, it appears to be broadly distributed in the state and occupies a wide range of habitats. It thus appears to be secure.