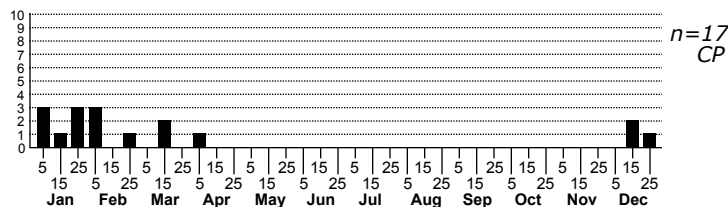
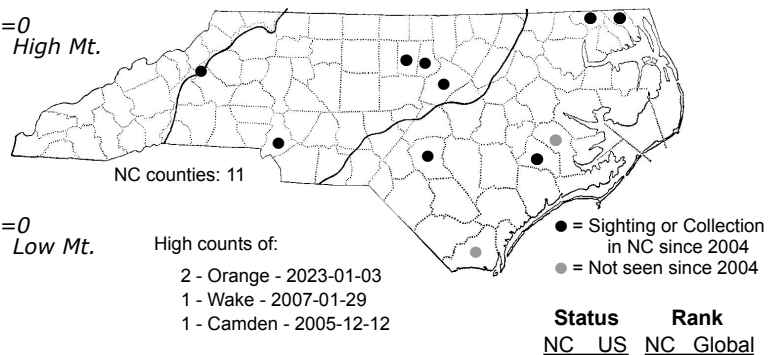
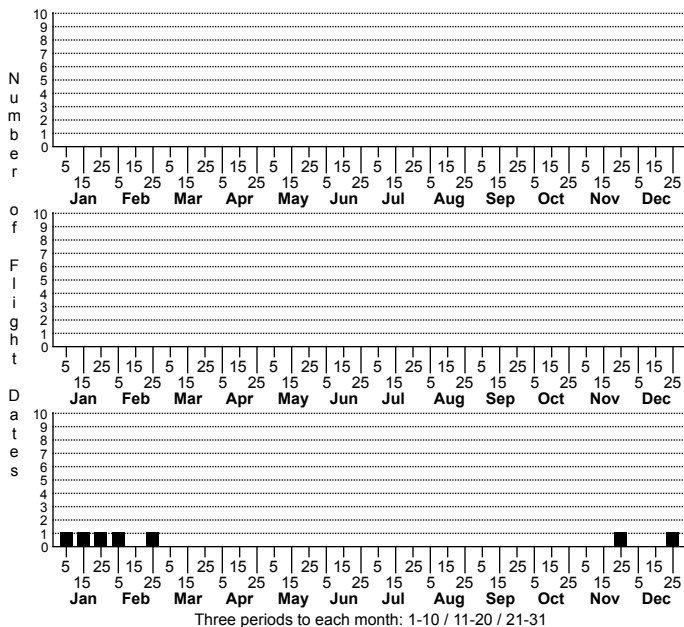


Paleacrita merriccata White-spotted Cankerworm Moth



FAMILY: Geometridae SUBFAMILY: Ennominae TRIBE: Bistonini

TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: The genus is limited to North America and contains three species of which two occur in North Carolina.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

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

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: Our two species look unlike most other geometrids and can be distinguished by the light reniform spot in *P. merriccata* which is absent in *P. vernata*. Females of both species are flightless. In *merriccata*, the body is dark gray or grayish brown and lacks the dark dorsal stripe that is often present in *vernata*; the ends of the tarsal joints also tend to be darker and not contrasting with the rest of the leg as in *vernata* (Rindge, 1975).

DISTRIBUTION: Found throughout the state in wooded areas.

FLIGHT COMMENT: This is one of our "winter" moths, active when most other moth species are surviving in the egg, young larval or pupal stages. Adults are often seen at convenience stores where they are the only moths that come to the lights in January and February.

HABITAT: A number of our records come from lakeshores, but at least a few come from Longleaf Pine savannas or wooded sites of uncertain habitats but apparently located away from impoundments

FOOD: The foodplants of this species are unknown but *P. vernata* is known to be polyphagous on woody trees

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Adults come to light but not to bait.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 [S4?]

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

COMMENTS: Since few people are searching for moths during cold days in January and February, our records undoubtedly under represent the species status in our state. The causes of population outbreaks and their absence in rural areas are unknown. Flightlessness may allow females to produce more eggs and to attract less attention from predators for otherwise it would seem to be a poor strategy. Much remains to be learned about this interesting species particularly if the caterpillars feed on tree species shunned by *P. vernata*.