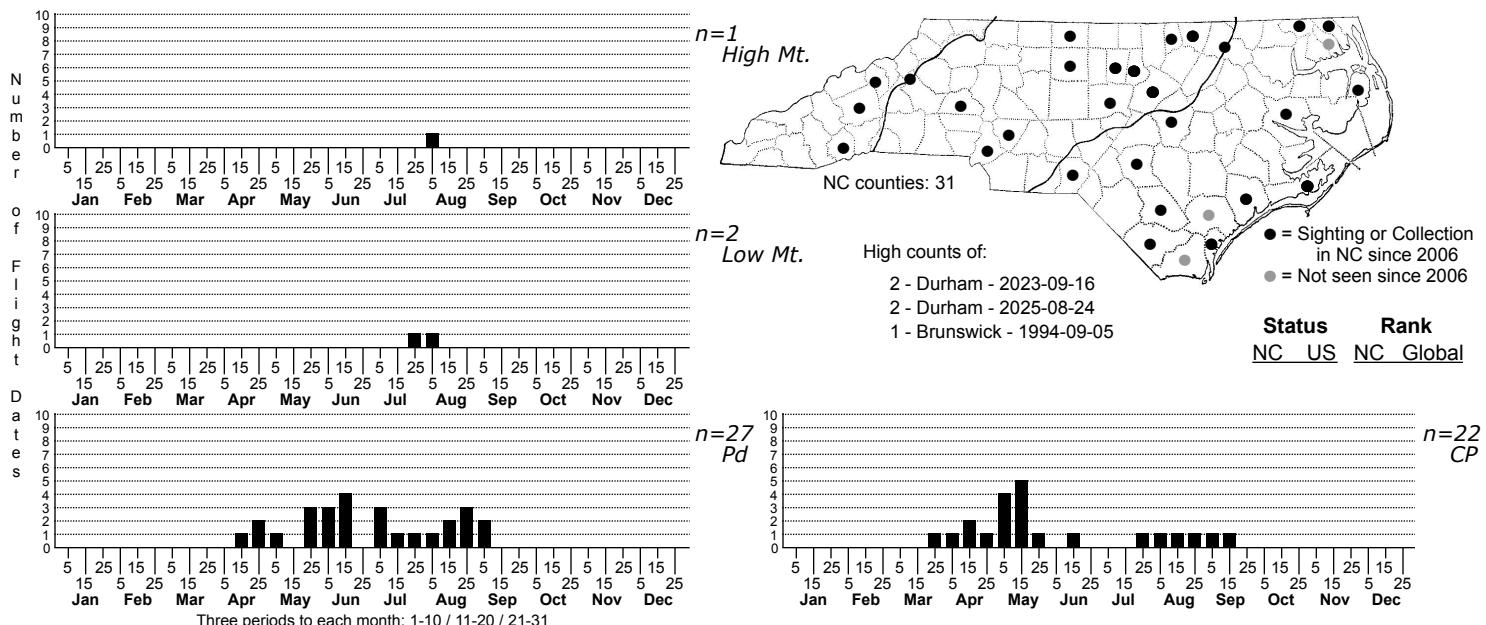


# Paratrea plebeja Plebeian Sphinx



FAMILY: Sphingidae SUBFAMILY: Sphinginae TRIBE: Sphingini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: A single species genus allied to *Manduca*.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1948); Hedges (1971); Tuttle (2007)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1948); Wagner (2005); Tuttle (2007)

ID COMMENTS: A moderately small, gray, and streaky sphinx moth. Most similar to *Sphinx gordius*, with which it overlaps in range and flight periods in North Carolina. Both species possess a well-defined white discal spot but *plebeja* has a dark apical dash that is missing in *gordius*, and *gordius* has a darker thorax. *Ceratomia undulosa* has a similar pattern but is much larger and has more conspicuous cross lines. *Lapara coniferarum* and *Isoparce cupressi* are browner and lack the white discal spot. Sexes are similar.

DISTRIBUTION: Our records indicate the species is relatively common over the eastern half of North Carolina. Because the foodplant is statewide and the entire range of the species covers the eastern half of the U.S., it should be looked for in the western part of the state as well.

FLIGHT COMMENT: May have two flights in North Carolina; more continuous further south (Wagner, 2005).

HABITAT: Look for this species at the edge of wooded areas where trumpet vine is growing, i.e. powerlines, old roads through hardwoods or mixed pine-hardwood areas, or along agricultural fields bordered by wood lots.

FOOD: Larvae are apparently stenophagous, with Trumpet-creeper (*Campsis radicans*) being the main foodplant (Wagner, 2005). Forbes (1948) also notes that Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*), passionflower (*Passiflora*), and lilac (*Syringa*) have been reported. Carolina Spider-lily (*Hymenocallis crassifolia*) is pollinated by this species (Haddock, 1998). In North Carolina, all of our feeding records are for Trumpet-creeper.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults are frequent flower visitors at dusk but it is not attracted to baits. Comes to 15 watt UV blacklights in small numbers and appears to be less common than would be expected based on the distribution and abundance of its host plant; like other Sphingids, mercury-vapor lights or other stronger sources of UV than standard 15 watt blacklights may be needed to accurately determine its distribution and abundance. Caterpillar surveys are also likely to be productive.

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 its distribution in the state, *Paratrea* seems to be at least fairly widespread in the eastern half of the state and feeds on a species that is common in disturbed areas; appears to be secure.