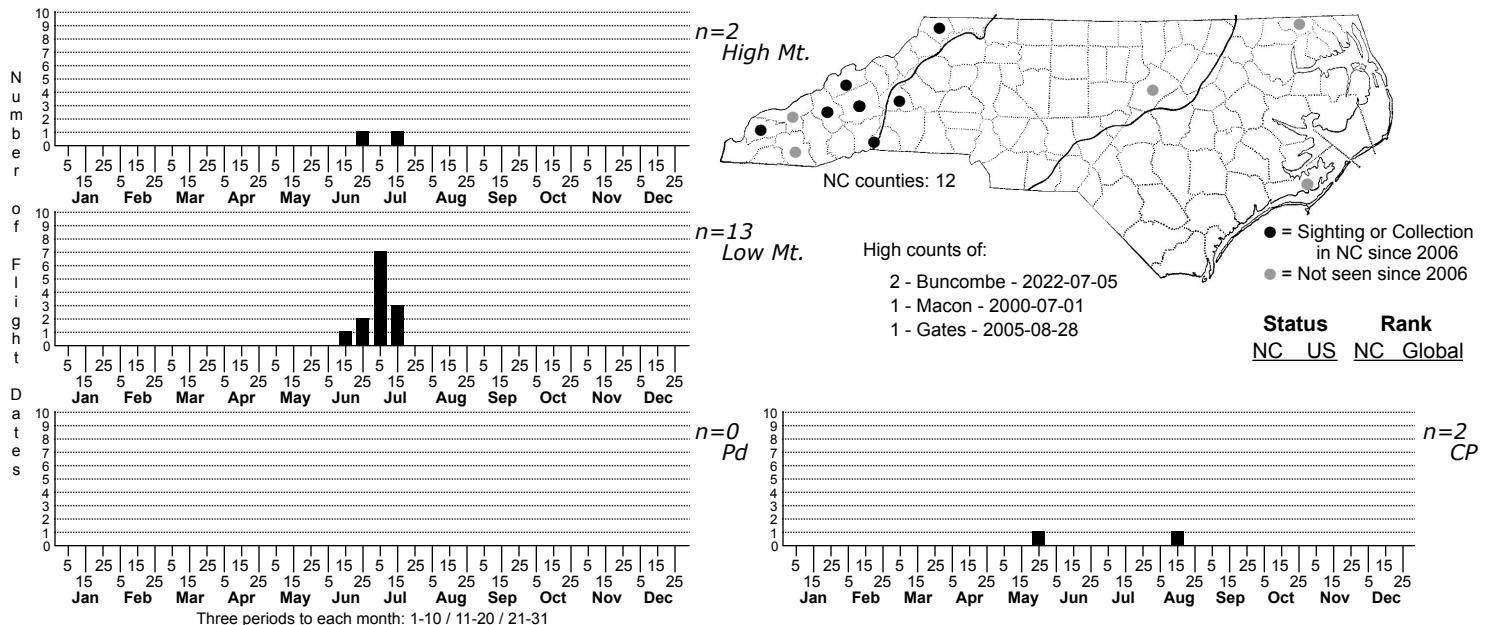


Darapsa versicolor Hydrangea Sphinx



FAMILY: Sphingidae SUBFAMILY: Macroglossinae TRIBE: Macroglossini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: This genus of medium sized moths contains three species, all found in North Carolina.

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: Fore-wings and body are olive green narrowly banded with curved white lines that are occasionally shaded with pale pink or purplish; hindwings are reddish. *< i>Darapsa versicolor* may be our most beautiful sphinx; a freshly emerged specimen is absolutely gorgeous. Sexes are similar. Larvae are green or brown with small heads; the usual Sphingid pattern of seven oblique pale stripes run through the spiracles and frosted with white spots (Wagner, 2005).

DISTRIBUTION: Potentially occurs statewide but records are extremely scarce and scattered.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Probably two broods in the coastal plain with adults on the wing in May and August.

HABITAT: We have one larval record from Merchant's Millpond State Park, where it was observed feeding on Buttonbush. Most of the reported larval host plants are shoreline species, occurring along the edges of ponds, lakes, marshes, swamps, and streams, often in somewhat open conditions.

FOOD: Larvae are oligophagous or stenophagous, probably feeding mainly on Buttonbush (*< i>Cephalanthus occidentalis*), but also reported from loosestrife (*< i>Decodon*), *< i>Hydrangea*, and water-willow (*< i>Justicia*) (Wagner, 2005). In North Carolina, we have feeding records for Buttonbush and hydrangea.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults come to lights, visit flowers, and have been reported at baits. As the other two species in this genus respond similarly, the appearance at bait is probably true. It may be easy to find caterpillars on Buttonbush.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4? SNR [S2S3]

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

COMMENTS: Records for this species are highly scarce in North Carolina, although neither its habitat nor host plants would appear to be limiting. Although there is some evidence that it is declining over parts of its range (NatureServe, 2015), its status in North Carolina is uncertain. More sampling, using both lights and bait, needs to be done in lakeshore and marsh habitats before its status can be accurately determined.