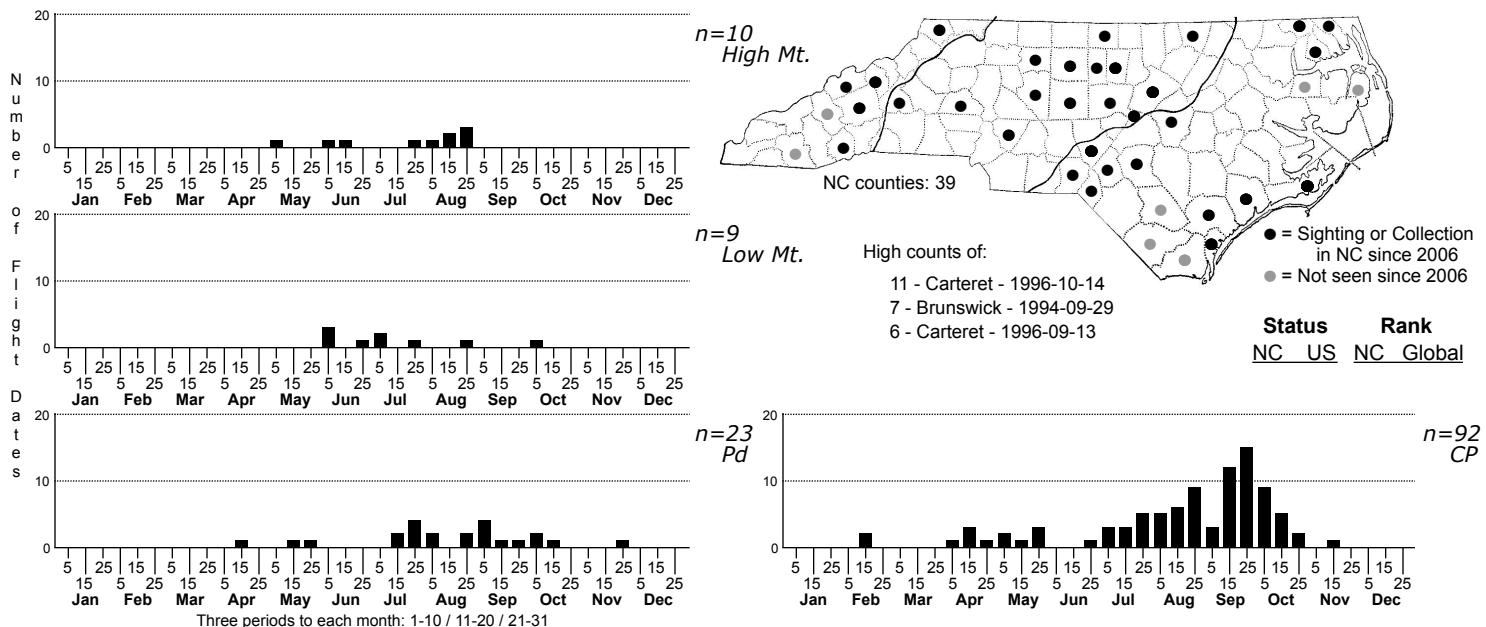


Xylophanes tersa Tersa Sphinx



FAMILY: Sphingidae SUBFAMILY: Macroglossinae TRIBE: Macroglossini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: *Xylophanes* is a very large Neotropical genus of some 87 species of which 5 have been found in the U.S. and 1 is resident in North Carolina.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

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

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

ID COMMENTS: *Xylophanes tersa* is moderately small yellow-brown Sphingid with very narrow, angular wings. Forewings and body are tan and longitudinally striped with narrow bands of yellow and darker brown. The hindwing is black along the costal edge and a band of yellow wedges parallels the margin of the hindwing. Other species of *Xylophanes* could possibly occur as migrants in North Carolina but have hindwings that usually are uniformly colored and lack the central yellow band. Sexes are similar.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs statewide, from the Barrier Islands to High Mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: There are probably 2-3 broods in the coastal plain and fewer in the mountains.

HABITAT: Occurs primarily in open habitats. We have a large number of records from the Barrier Islands from both dune habitats and maritime forest. Farther inland, *X. tersa* has been commonly collected in Longleaf Pine habitats, ranging from wet savannas and flatwoods to dry sandhills. Records from bottomland forests appear to be lacking but we have a number of records from lakeshore habitats. In the Piedmont and Mountains, *X. tersa* has been recorded from dry woodlands on ridge tops and there are at least a couple of recent records from high elevation habitats in Mount Mitchell State Park.

FOOD: Larvae are stenophagous, feeding on members of the Rubiaceae. Tuttle (2007) and Wagner (2005) specifically list Poorjoe (*Hexasepalum* [=*Diodia*] *teres*) and Buttonplant (*Spermacoce glabra*), both of which occur in North Carolina; at least some of the larvae that have been photographed here seem to be feeding or resting on *Hexasepalum*. Other species of the Rubiaceae may also be used, although no records appear to exist from *Galium*, *Houstonia*, Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), or other common members of that family. A few records also exist for members of other plant families, including *Catalpa* (Wagner, 2005; Tuttle, 2007). There are BugGuide records of larvae feeding on *Hexasepalum teres* (Alicia Jackson, 2020) and Virginia Buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*) in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults are avid flower visitors at dusk, and we also have a few records from baits. They come well to 15 watt UV lights. Larvae have been observed on a number of occasions, usually as single individuals. We have at least a few records for pupae, probably reflecting the fact that they pupate at or near the surface of the ground.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S5]

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

COMMENTS: With its statewide distribution and use of a broad range of habitat types, this species appears to be secure.