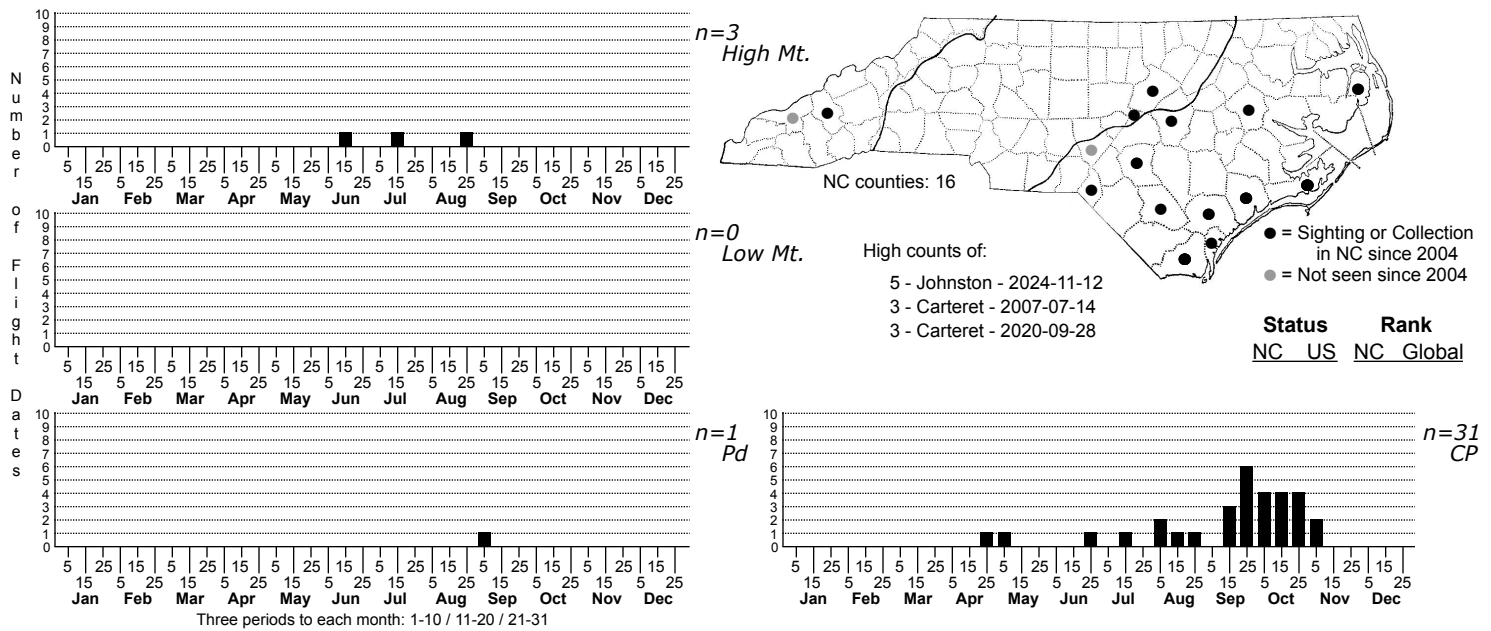


Utetheisa ornatrix Ornate Bella Moth



FAMILY: Erebiidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: Although two species, ornatrix and bella, have been recognized in the past based on differences in coloration (e.g., Hodges et al., 1983; Covell, 1984; Schmidt and Opler, 2008), Forbes (1960) treated them as races, finding no differences in the genitalia and extensive intergradation between populations. This opinion was upheld by Lafontaine and Schmidt (2010), citing evidence from DNA bar-coding in addition to the lack of genitalic differences.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1960); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: Unmistakeable, with conspicuous aposematic coloration: forewings are bright orange, pink, or yellow and crossed by several transverse white bands spotted with black; hindwings are pink with a black outer margin.

DISTRIBUTION: Recorded in North Carolina primarily in the southern half of the Coastal Plain.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults apparently fly during most of the growing season in the Coastal Plain

HABITAT: In the Coastal Plain, records all come from open, herbaceous habitats, including barrier island dunes and Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, and sandhills. Records from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park come from high ridges, with one at least containing old field habitat (Crotalaria, however, has not been recorded in the park nor in Swain or Haywood Counties -- DLIA, 2014; NCU Flora of the Southeastern United States, 2014).

FOOD: Oligophagous, feeding primarily on Legumes with a preference for Rattlebox (Crotalaria spp.) (Forbes, 1960)

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Strictly diurnal; virtually all records are based on chance encounters rather than trapping or baiting

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 [SU]

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

COMMENTS: Apparently uncommon and possibly a habitat specialist, but also probably undersampled due to its day-flying habits. More needs to be learned about its distribution, abundance, and habitat associations in North Carolina before its conservation status can be estimated.