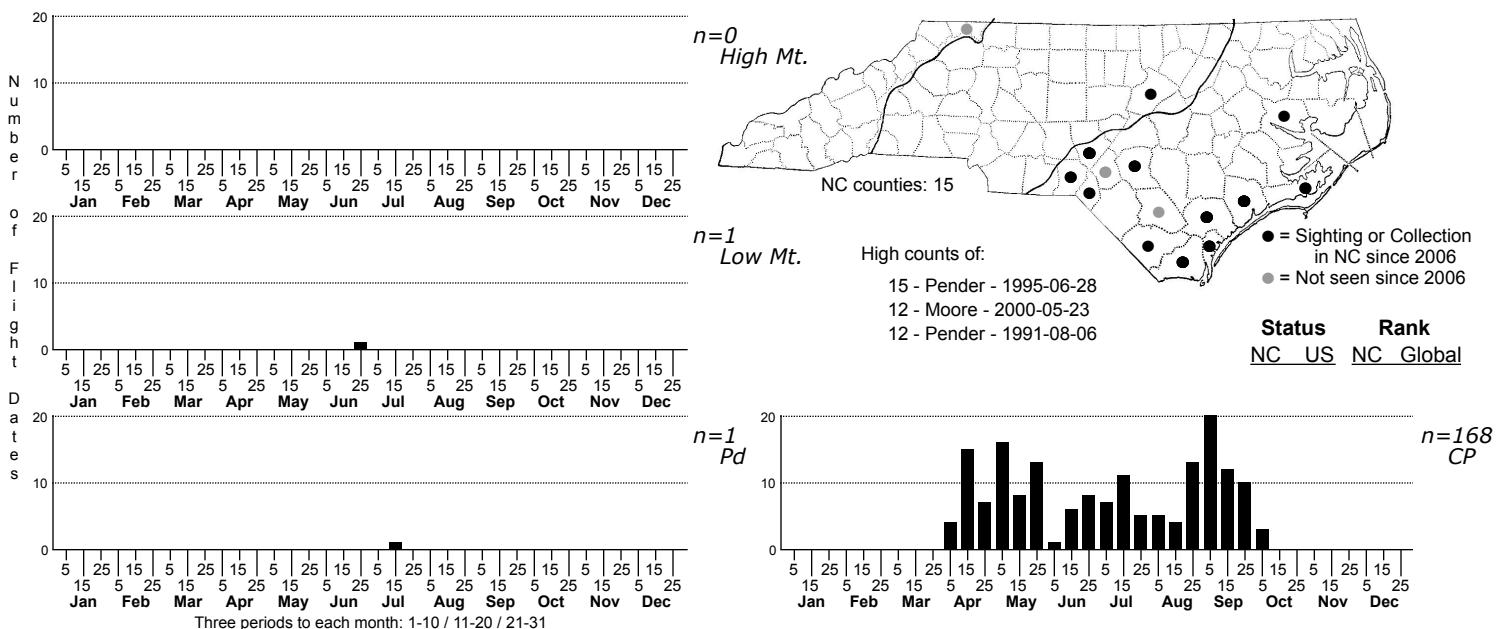


# *Virbia laeta* Joyful Virbia



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of fourteen species in North America, five of which occur in North Carolina

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984; as *Holomelina laeta*); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960); Zaspel et al. (2008)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1960)

ID COMMENTS: Unmistakeable. A moderately small moth with ash-gray to black forewings usually bordered by a narrow line of pink or crimson along the costa and with bright scarlet hindwings with a black border along the outer margin. The rear of the head is also scarlet, as is the abdomen, which has a series of black spots on the dorsal surface.

DISTRIBUTION: The vast majority of our records come from the southern half of the Coastal Plain, including the Fall-line Sandhills. The presence of this species in the Mountains is based on a single specimen collected at New River State Park.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Continuously present in the Coastal Plain throughout the growing season but with three peaks in frequency

HABITAT: Outside of North Carolina, *Virbia laeta* is reported to be generally associated with pine forests (Zaspel et al., 2008), or is considered a generalist with possibly some affinity to xeric habitats (Kons and Borth, 2009). All but two of our records, however, come from Longleaf Pine habitats, particularly Wet Pine Savannas and Sandhill Seeps. Others are associated with beaver sedge mires or depressional wetlands are embedded in sandhills habitats. Only a small number come from sites that appear to lack wet habitats.

FOOD: Larvae of this species have been reared in captivity on dandelion (*Taraxacum*) and plantain (*Plantago*), suggesting they might be polyphagous, feeding on a wide range of forbs.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes well to blacklights, with up to 15 collected in a single trap. Adults do not feed, so do not come to bait. Most *Virbia* can be flushed from their habitats during the day, indicating they are at least partially diurnal (Zaspel et al., 2008)

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S3S4]

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

COMMENTS: In North Carolina, at least, this species appears to be fairly specialized in terms of its habitats, at least in comparison to species such as *Virbia opella* and *V. aurantiaca*, which occur in a much broader range of habitat types. More needs to be learned about its exact habitat requirements -- including its host plant use -- in order to accurately determine its conservation status.