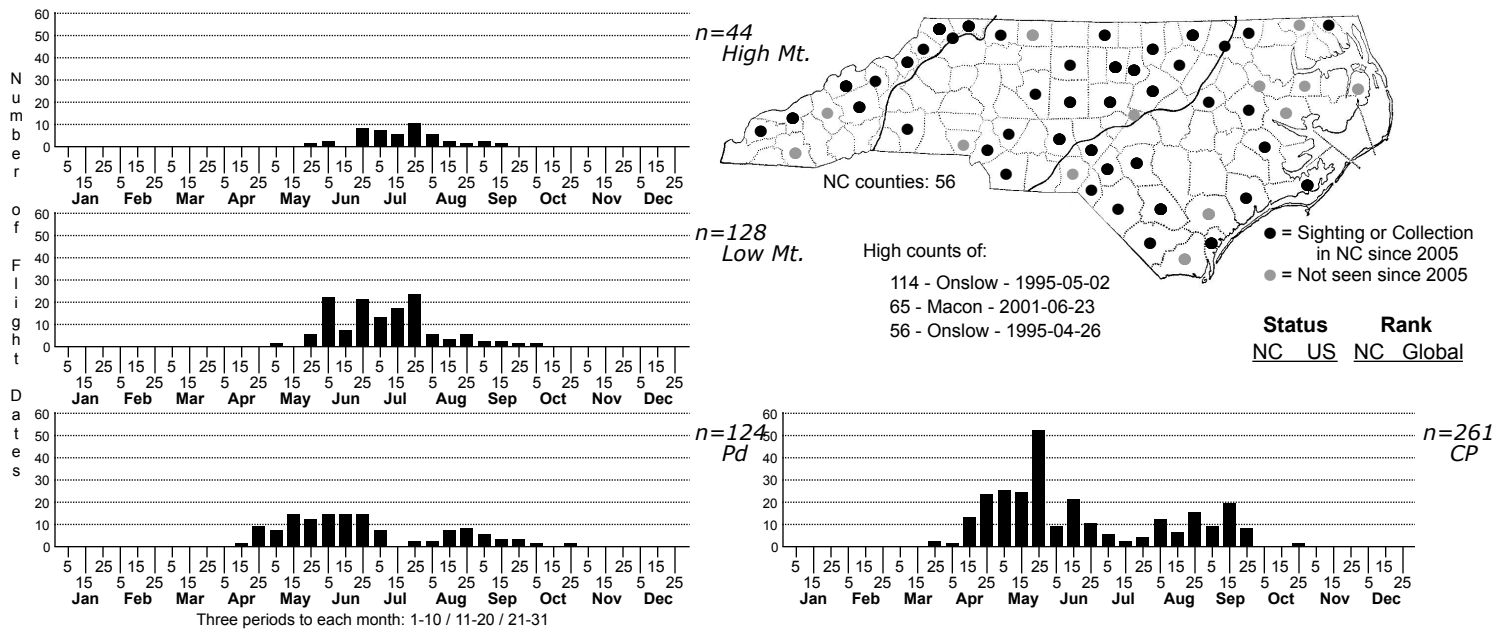


Virbia opella Tawny Virbia



FAMILY: Erebiidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of fourteen species in North America, five of which occur in North Carolina. In addition to the nominate form, Brimley (1938) listed *V. opella nigricans* as occurring in North Carolina. However, this record probably refers to what is now regarded as just a black-winged form of *opella* (as described by Forbes, 1960). *Virbia nigricans* currently refers to a species that is found only in a small area of New Jersey and Pennsylvania (see Zaspel et al., 2008).

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

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

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1960)

ID COMMENTS: *Virbia opella* is similar to several other orange-brown *Virbias*, but is generally larger and duskier. Fore-wings range from ochre- to blackish-yellow in males; females are usually cinnamon brown and have a vague, crescent-shaped discal spot. Hind-wings in the male usually are brown, similar in color to the forewings or darker. Hind-wings in the female usually have some reddish or pinkish and a variable amount of fuscous or black, including a diffuse discal spot, but the markings are not as sharply defined as in some of the other species. Specimens may be identifiable from photographs -- especially the males -- if the hindwings are visible. Males can also be identified on the basis of their genitalia (see Forbes, 1960 and Zaspel et al., 2008). Both sexes can be distinguished from *aurantiaca* and *ferruginosa* by their forewing venation (see Zaspel et al., 2008).

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide

FLIGHT COMMENT: Has two flights in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont but apparently just one mid-season flight in the Mountains

HABITAT: Virtually ubiquitous. Our records come from nearly all types of habitats in the state, including open beach dunes, Longleaf Pine habitats, and barrens, as well as densely wooded peatlands, riparian hardwoods, and both dry and mesic uplands.

FOOD: Host plant use has apparently not been observed in the wild, but the species probably feeds on low forbs, as reported for other members of this genus (see Forbes, 1960 and Wagner, 2005).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes well to blacklights, with up to 45 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 [S5]

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

COMMENTS: Given its abundance, widespread distribution, and generalized habitat use, this species appears to be one of our most secure species.