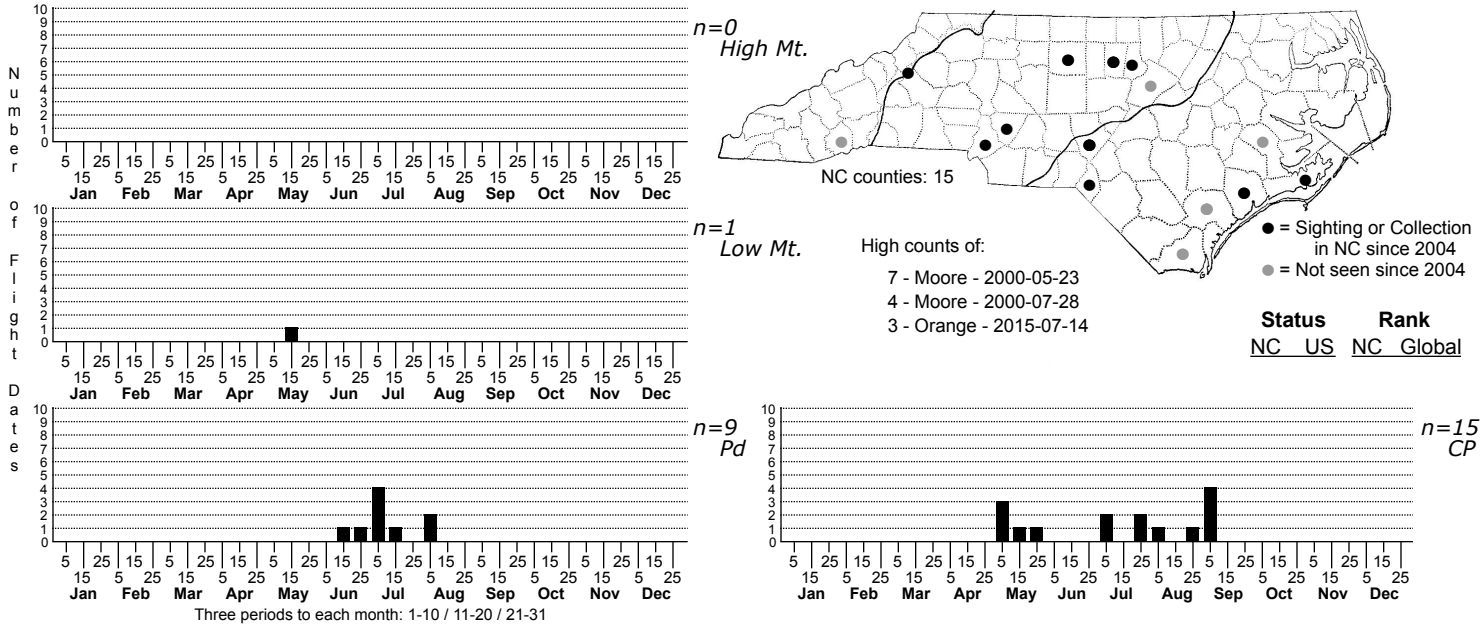
Virbia rubicundaria Ruddy Holomelina Moth



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 rubicundaria)
ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960); Zaspel et al. (2008)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: None

ID COMMENTS: The smallest and brightest orange of our species of Virbia. The forewings are generally pinkish orange and lack the discal spots and sub-median dark band sometimes found in aurantiaca. Hind-wings are unmarked bright orange in males and possess brown discal spots and a marginal band in females. Females in particular may be difficult to distinguish from those of aurantiaca except by their smaller size and brighter colors (Zaspel et al., 2008). Males of the two species can usually be distinguished based on the presence of dark marking on the hindwings of male aurantiaca but none in rubicundaria; unmarked forms of aurantiaca also exist, however, which may require dissection to determine.

DISTRIBUTION: Except for one historic record from Brevard in the Mountains (Wray, 1967), all of our records come from the eastern Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults have been recorded throughout the growing season but too few data exist to determine if there are distinct flight periods

HABITAT: The majority of our records come from Longleaf Pine habitats, including savannas, flatwoods, sandhills, and sandhill seeps. We also have records from Maritime Forests (Baldhead Island) and fairly ordinary Dry-Mesic Oak Hickory Forest in the Piedmont.

FOOD: Zaspel et al. (2008) list Dandelion and Wild Lettuce as host plants, but probably as foods accepted in captivity. in the wild, they probably feed on a variety of low forbs, as reported for other members of this genus (see Forbes, 1960 and Wagner, 2005).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Appears to come moderately to blacklights, usually in small numbers but with up to seven collected in a single trap. Adults do not feed, so do not come to bait. Most Virbias 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 [S3S4]

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

COMMENTS: Appears to be somewhat uncommon in North Carolina but may have been overlooked due to mis-identification as V. aurantiaca. It does not appear to be restricted by either host plants or habitats.