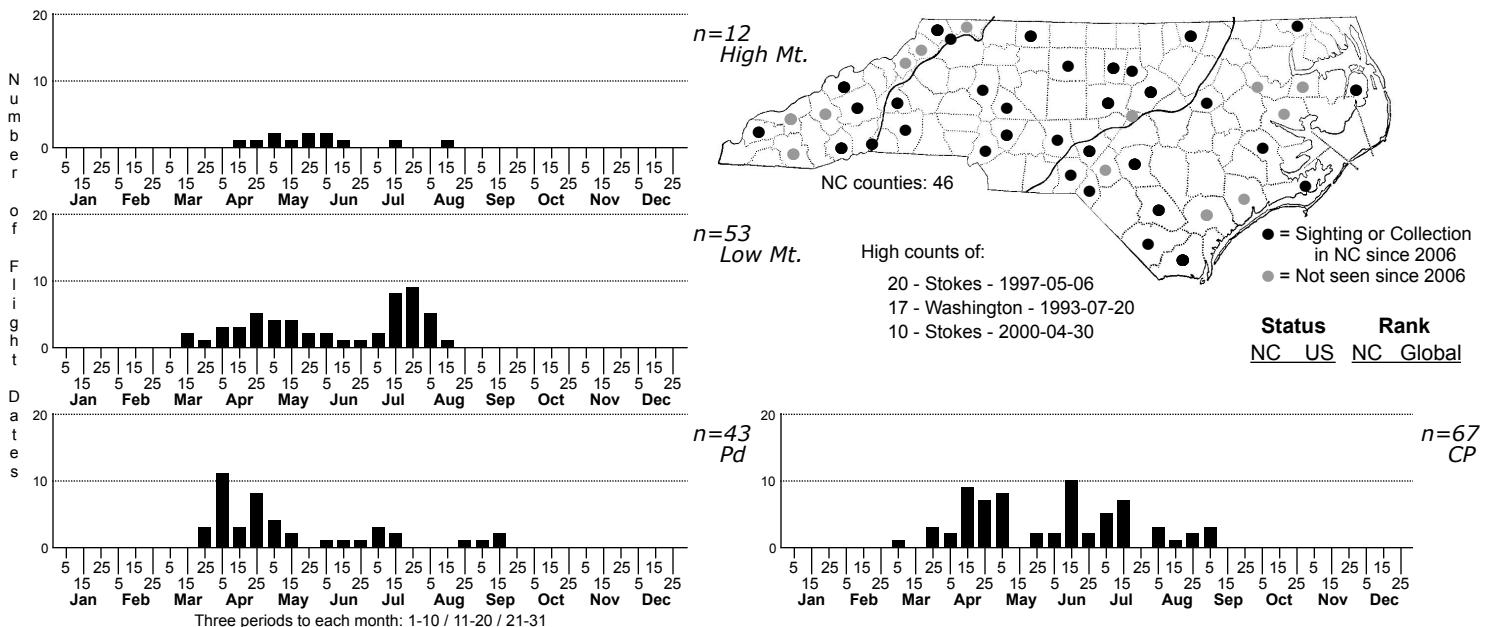


## *Zale aeruginosa* Green-dusted Zale



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Erebinae TRIBE: Ophiusini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of 39 species in this genus that occur north of Mexico, 23 of which have been recorded in North Carolina

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Wagner (2005); Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: A dark umber to coal black Zale, often with some bands of brown or purple; almost always frosted with green or greenish white scales, which make it unmistakable.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide, although we have no records from the Outer Banks and other barrier islands (despite the fact that Live Oak has been reported as one of its host plants).

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults appear to be present in from spring to fall over most areas of the state.

HABITAT: In the Coastal Plain, *aeruginosa* is common in both Pocosins and other peatland habitats, as well as Longleaf Pine Savannas and Flatwoods, all habitats where heaths are a major component of the vegetation but oaks are either rare or absent. In the Piedmont, it has been recorded again at sites where heaths are common (e.g., Black Ankle Bog and Hanging Rock State Park) but not at several intensively sampled mafic habitats where heaths are rare but oaks are not. Habitats used in the Mountains include both riparian and upland communities, in most of which both heaths and oaks are common.

FOOD: Franclemont (cited by Forbes, 1954) reported *Zale aeruginosa* as feeding on White Oak (*Quercus alba*) and Live Oak (*Q. virginiana*); these same two species were also reported as host plants by Kimball, 1965; Covell, 1984; and Wagner, 2005, perhaps based on Franclemont and Forbes. We have not, however, recorded this species in maritime forests on the barrier islands where Live Oak is dominant (we have, however, recorded it at a couple of mainland sites where small amounts of Live Oak are present). At many other sites where we have records for this species, no oaks are present at all, including many peatland and Longleaf Pine communities in the Coastal Plain, where *Z. aeruginosa* is common. Although it may feed on oaks to some extent (Wagner et al., 2011, were able to rear ex ovo larvae on oaks), we strongly suspect it feeds primarily on Blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.), which were recorded as host plants by Quinter and Wagner et al. (2011), and possibly other species of heaths. There is a BugGuide record (George Smiley, 2019) of a larva reared from Sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*) in Texas.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Appears to come well to blacklights, with up to 17 caught in a single trap (1-3 being much more frequent numbers). Like other Zales, it also comes well to bait.

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: This species may be specialist on heath-containing habitats, including lowland and upland examples. Collectively, these habitats are widespread across the state, however, as is probably *aeruginosa* itself, making it relatively secure from most short-term, localized impacts.