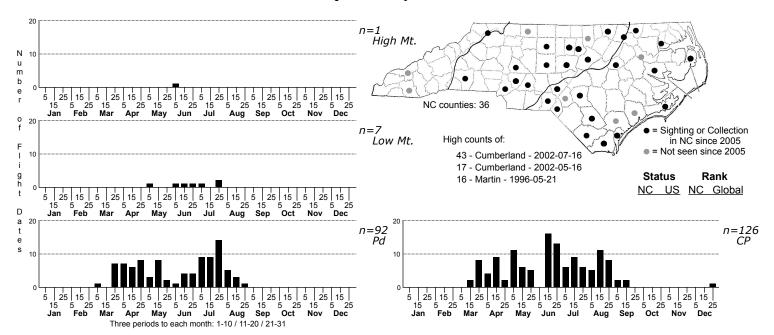
Zale obliqua Oblique Zale



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. Zale obliqua and squamularis are closely related and apparently form a species complex with one or more undescribed species (Wagner et al., 2011)

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: McDunnough (1943); Forbes (1954); Rings et al. (1992)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1954), Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: Obliqua is one of the easier species in this group to recognize: smoothly patterned pale brown and blue gray, with only a slight contrast between the antemedial and postmedial areas (before and after the medial line). The medial line forms a boundary between a lighter, more basal area and a darker, more distal area; this line is contiguous with the inner edge of the reniform in obliqua and Z. squamularis but crosses the wing before the reniform in the other pine-feeding species. Obliqua is larger than squamularis and differs by having a much less contrasting medial line (which is blackish in squamularis) and showing much less contrast between the pale antemedial area and the darker postmedial area.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs over most of the state except the High Mountains

FLIGHT COMMENT: Appears to have just a single brood in the Mountains but may have a spring and summer brood in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain

HABITAT: The majority of our records come from the Coastal Plain, where it is associated with a range of wet-to-xeric forests: blackwater and brownwater floodplain forests, Non-riverine Swamp Forests, Coastal Fringe Evergreen Forests and Maritime Deciduous Forests, Wet Longleaf Pine Savannas and Flatwoods, and Pine-scrub oak Sandhills. In the Piedmont and Mountains, it has been recorded in both wet, riparian habitats and dry ridges.

FOOD: Larvae are stenophagous, apparently feeding on just a few species of pine. Wagner et al. (2011) state that Pitch Pine (<i>Pinus rigida</i>) is the primary host plant in the North. In North Carolina, however, Pitch Pine is restricted to the Mountains, where it may be used to some extent although there are also a number of other possibilities. Over most of its range in North Carolina, <i>Z. obliqua</i> probably uses Longleaf Pine (<i>P. palustris</i>) and Loblolly Pine (<i>P. taeda</i>), occurring at some sites where each of these two pines is the only one present. It may also feed on Pond Pine (<i>P. serotina</i>), a close relative of Pitch Pine, which often occurs in combination with the other two species. However, we only have a few records from peatland habitats, where Pond Pine is most abundant, and only from sites where Loblolly Pine is also present.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes well to both blacklights and bait.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4S5]

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

COMMENTS: Although the distribution in the Piedmont needs to be better documented, obliqua occupies a wide range of habitats across most of the state and appears to be secure.