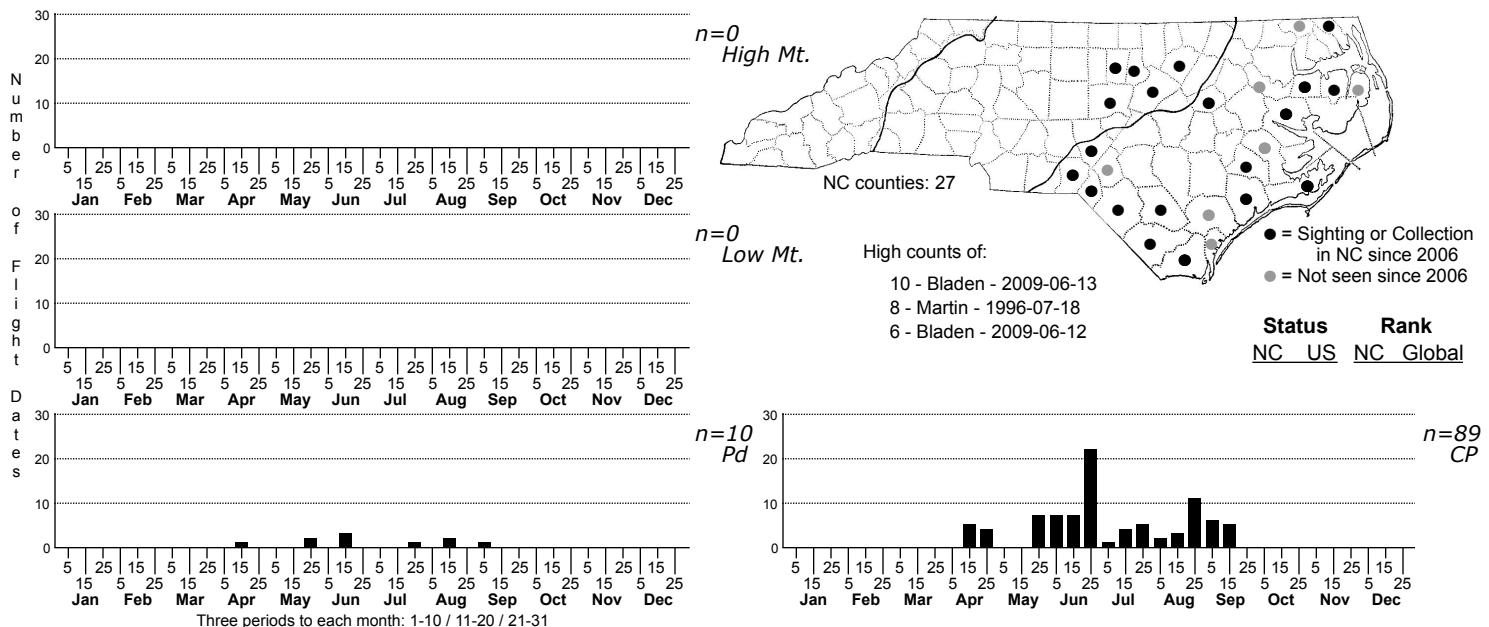


# *Cutina distincta* Distinguished Cypress Owlet Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Erebinae TRIBE: Poaphilini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of four species in this genus that occur in North America north of Mexico (Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2010). All are restricted to the southeastern United States and have been recorded in North Carolina (Pogue and Ferguson, 1998).

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Leckie and Beadle (2018)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Pogue and Ferguson (1998)

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

ID COMMENTS: A medium-small, contrastingly marked, Erebidae. The basal area is strongly marked with black, as is the metanotum; blackish patches are also located in the subterminal area below the costa and along the inner margin at the tornal angle (Pogue and Ferguson, 1998). The basal line, antemedian, and postmedian lines are also black; the antemedian is usually straight, running straight across the wing, the postmedian more undulating and excurved. The median area is pale, either whitish or pale gray just beyond the antemedian line but shading to darker gray or tan towards the postmedian; orbicular and reniform spots are absent. The postmedian line is usually bounded externally with white, especially before the dark patches at the costa and tornus. Apart from the blackish patches, the subterminal area is shaded with brown. Hindwings are pale brown. The contrast between the basal and medial areas, along with the straightness of the antemedian line, usually are enough to distinguish this species from other members of this genus. However, some specimens may have a more irregular antemedian and a more mottled pattern overall (see Figure 16 of Pogue and Ferguson). In those cases, dissection may be needed to identify the species.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably naturally occurs throughout the Coastal Plain, including the Fall-line Sandhills, as well as a few sites in the Piedmont where natural cypress swamps exist. Several sites occupied in the Piedmont appear to be associated with planted populations of cypress.

FLIGHT COMMENT: We have records from early April to early September, with indications of up to three peaks in activity

HABITAT: Most of our records come from riverine swamp forests, but we also have a few from non-riverine and tidal swamp forests and at least one from a pond cypress savanna.

FOOD: Larvae have been found on Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) but at least a few records come from sites where Pond Cypress (*T. ascendens*) is the most likely host plant.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes well to blacklights; we have no records from bait.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 SNR [S3S4]

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

COMMENTS: This species is a strong host plant and habitat specialist, but on species and habitats that are still widespread in at least the outer third of the state. Several threats exist, however, including sea-level rise and salt-water intrusion along the Coast; draining and conversion of Carolina Bays and other cypress-savannas to agriculture and silviculture; and loss of deep swamp habitats due to timber harvest and creation of impoundments. Despite these threats, and past losses of habitat due to massive timber cutting in bottomland forests, this species currently appears to be relatively secure within the state.