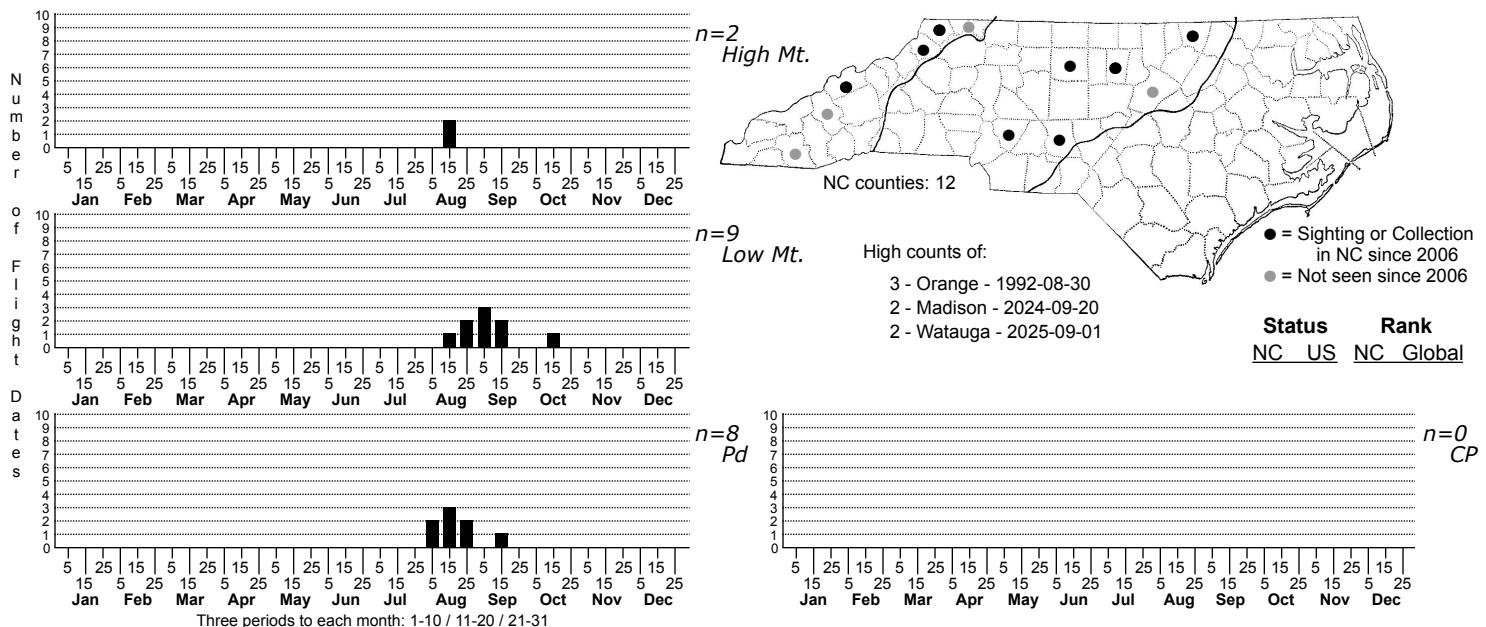


Catocala obscura Obscure Underwing



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Erebinae TRIBE: Catocalini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of 103 species in this genus that occur in North America (Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2010, 2015), 67 of which have been recorded in North Carolina. Included by Barnes and McDunnough (1918) in their Group V (also adopted by Forbes, 1954). This group comprises species, all of which feed on Hickories or Walnuts (Juglandaceae). In addition to obscura, other members of this group that occur in North Carolina include habilis, serena, robinsonii, judith, flebilis, angusi, residua, and sappho.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Sargent (1976)

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

ID COMMENTS: A large, smooth gray Underwing with black hindwings. The ground color of the forewings is a dull, medium gray. The transverse lines and spots are present but not contrasting. The subterminal line is a narrow band of diffuse white, often bounded on either side by bands of gray. Basal and marginal dashes are absent as is any strong contrast between the outer and inner portions of the forewings. The hindwings are black with a white fringe. Catocala residua is similar but is a darker, ashy gray in the median and basal area, contrasting with the paler outer area that includes a wider white subterminal line and a paler marginal area. Residua also has dark markings in the marginal area that are missing in obscura and often has a hindwing fringe that is fuscous rather than white (Sargent, 1976). Catocala robinsonii, myristica, and angusi are similar in size and can have a smooth ground color, but they are usually paler and often have dark, contrasting dashes or bands. Catocala judith is similar in its obscure markings and coloration but is much smaller.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs from the Mountains to the eastern Piedmont

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine; most of our records come from August and September

HABITAT: All of our records come from hardwood forests associated with rich soils, including rich alluvial forests, dry or mesic basic forests, rich cove forests, and northern hardwoods.

FOOD: Larvae are stenophagous, feeding on Shagbark Hickories (*Carya ovata*) and (*C. carolinae-septentrionalis*) (Wagner et al., 2011). We do not have any feeding records in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes to lights but it is not clear how strongly they are attracted, at least to 15 watt UV lights. Like other underwings, it probably comes to bait.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 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 one of our least common Shagbark-feeding Underwings but otherwise occurs in similar habitats and occupies approximately the same range. The same pattern has been observed elsewhere (Forbes, 1954; Sargent, 1976), but the reasons for its lower frequency of occurrence do not seem to be known.