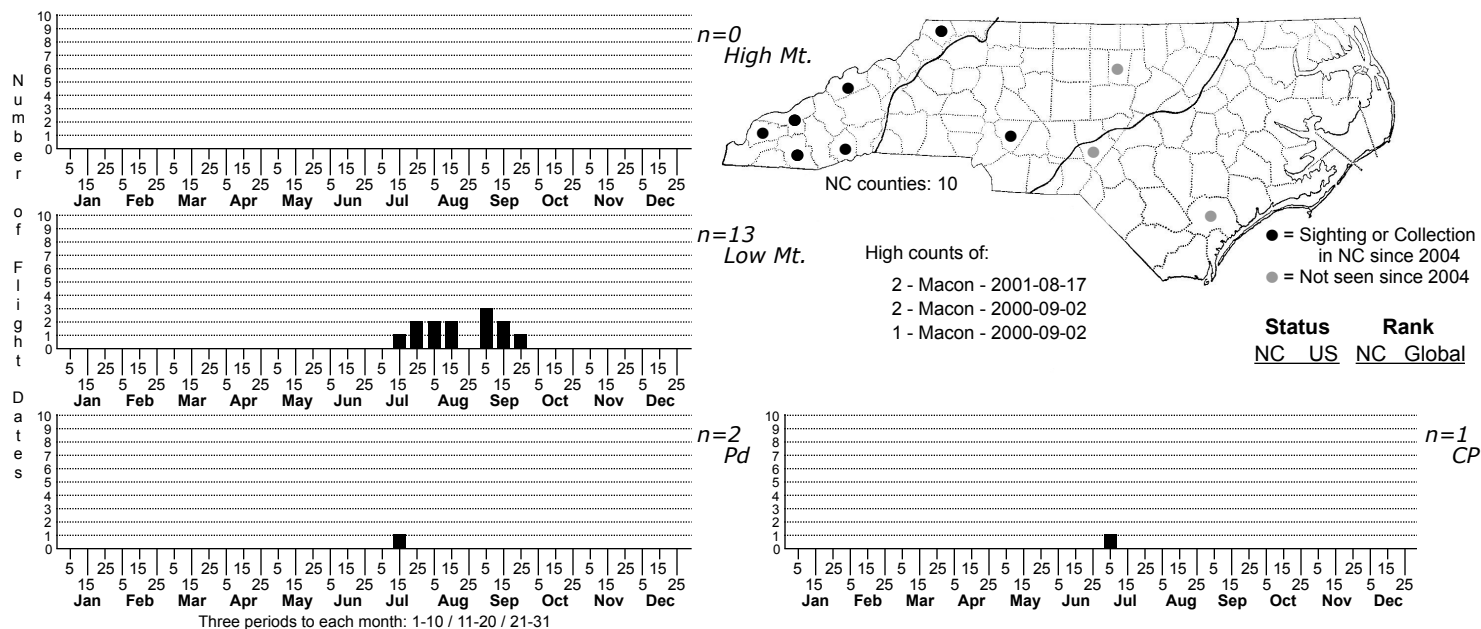


Catocala sappho Sappho Underwing



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 10 species, all of which feed on Hickories or Walnuts (Juglandaceae). In addition to sappho, other members of this group that occur in North Carolina include habilis, serena, robinsonii, judith, flebilis, angusi, obscura, and residua.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

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

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

ID COMMENTS: A large, pale gray Underwing with a strongly contrasting reddish brown reniform and dark blotches at the costal ends of the antemedian and postmedian lines. Hindwings are dark with a white fringe (Forbes, 1954). Unlikely to be confused with any other of our Underwing species.

DISTRIBUTION: Our records span the state

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, with adults appearing in mid- to late summer and peaking in the fall.

HABITAT: Our records all come from stands of hardwoods, ranging from fairly mesic slopes and riparian habitats to dry ridgetops.

FOOD: Stenophagous, feeding on hickories. Wagner et al. (2011) specifically mention Pignut and other section Carya hickories but Forbes (1954) and Sargent (1976) state Pecan -- a section Apocarya species -- is the host.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes to light to some extent but like other Underwings may come better to bait. Several of our records come from daytime observations when individuals were flushed from trunks; tapping is, thus, likely to be an effective method for recording this species.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 S2S3

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

COMMENTS: Sargent (1976) described sappho as generally considered very rare, although locally common and regularly observed at some sites in Florida and the Gulf Coast. Wagner et al. (2011) likewise describe this species as scarce outside of Florida and the Southern Appalachians. Since this species may be irruptive, it is not clear how many of our observations represent resident populations. More information is needed -- particularly through documenting larvae -- to determine its status, host plant use, and habitat range as it exists in North Carolina before its conservation needs can be estimated.