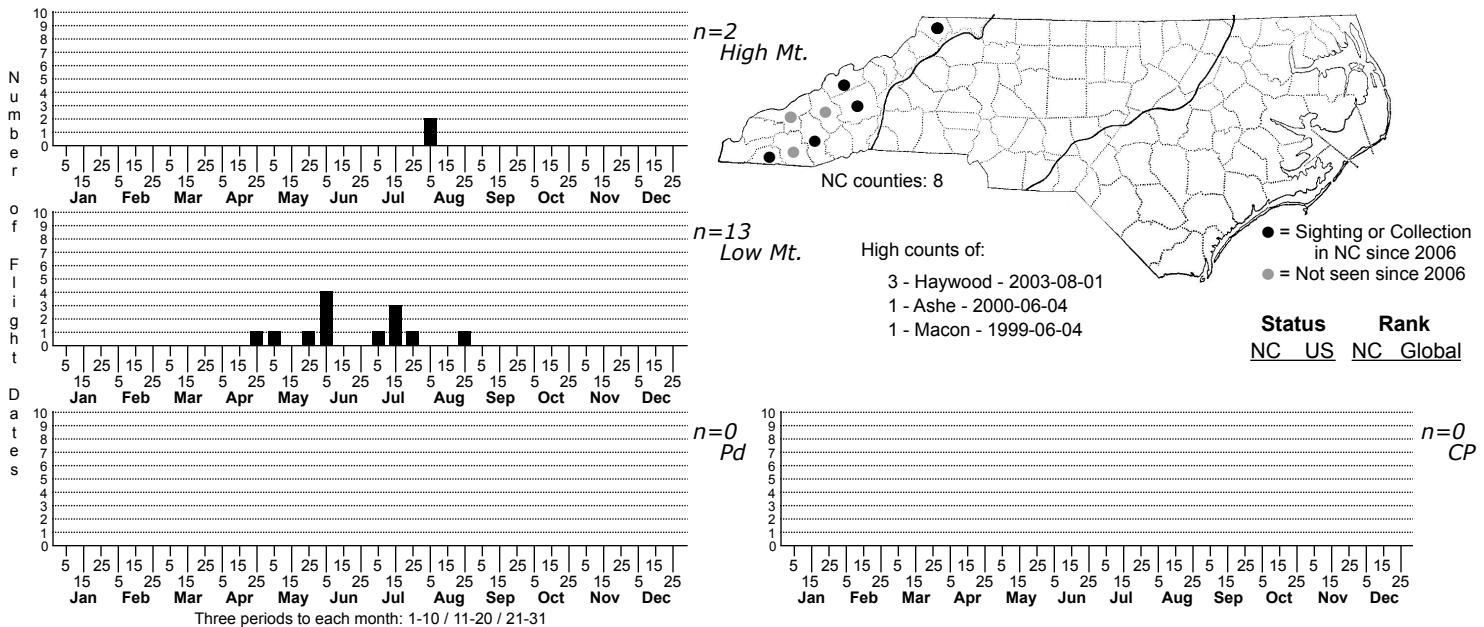


Abrostola ovalis Oval Abrostola



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Plusiinae TRIBE: Abrostolini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of four species in this genus that occur in North America north of Mexico (Lafontaine and Poole, 1991), two of which have been recorded in North Carolina.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Lafontaine and Poole (1991)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1954); Lafontaine and Poole (1991); Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: A medium-small looper with a distinctive buff-colored, strongly ovate patch at the base of the otherwise dark forewings. The hindwings are grayish brown, lighter at the base, and bordered by a pale fringe. Members of this genus have the antemedial line, postmedial line, and other maculations composed of raised black scales; no silver stigma is present as is usually found in members of this subfamily (Forbes, 1954; Lafontaine and Poole, 1991). The antemedial line is strongly arched, projecting out approximately 1/3 of the wing length and fusing with the inner side of the orbicular spot (Forbes, 1954).

DISTRIBUTION: Probably restricted to the mountains

FLIGHT COMMENT: We have records from late May to late August; we do not have enough information, however, to determine whether there are distinct broods

HABITAT: Our records come from stands of mesic hardwoods, including riparian forests, cove forests, and northern hardwoods

FOOD: Larvae are stenophagous, feeding on both stinging nettles (*Urtica* spp.) and Canada Wood-nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) (Wagner et al., 2011). In North Carolina, both Slender Nettle (*Urtica gracilis*) and Heartleaf Nettle (*U. chamaedryoides*) are rare. *Laportea*, on the other hand, is common in both the Mountains and Piedmont and extends into the Coastal Plain within the floodplains of brownwater rivers. BugGuide also has records for larvae feeding on American Hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Most of our records were obtained through use of blacklights but this species has also been recorded at building lights.

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: We have very few records so far for this species. If it is actually associated primarily with *Urtica* rather than *Laportea*, that could account for its rarity -- both of our native species of *Urtica* are listed as S1 by the Natural Heritage Program, with few documented populations even in the Mountains. If it does well on *Laportea*, on the other hand, it should be widespread in the Mountains and potentially present even in the Piedmont. In that case, it may be that it simply comes poorly to blacklights. Larval searches in large concentrations of *Laportea* (requiring either a very thick skin or very heavy clothing) may be needed to answer that question.