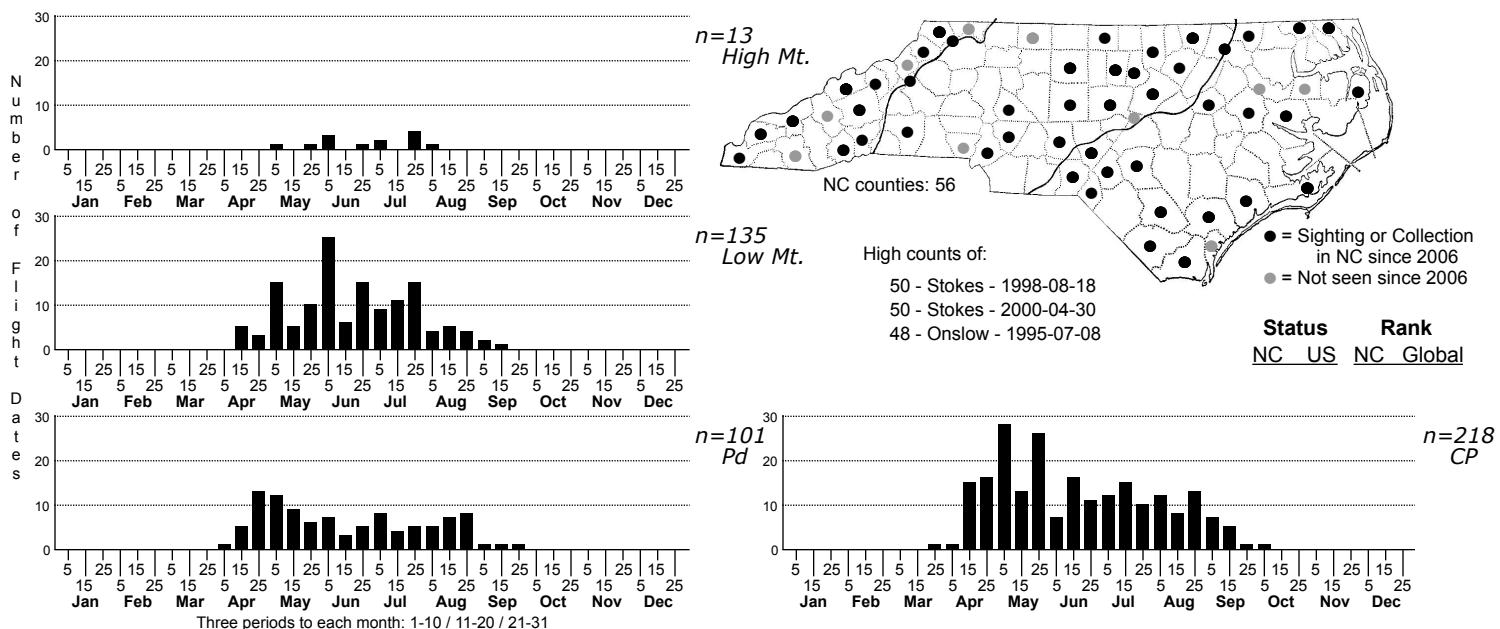


Chytonix palliatricula Cloaked Marvel



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Elaphriini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The genus *Chytonix* nominally contains some 30+ species from India, China, Japan and the Americas, but most belong in other genera, particularly the Neotropical species. Our fauna is limited to three species of which two occur in North Carolina and all may form a single genus. An apparently undescribed species akin to *C. sensilis* -- identified with barcoding -- occurs in October and November in central Florida.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954)

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

ID COMMENTS: Our two species are mottled brown with a distinct small white spot in the anal fold of the forewing. Distinguishing the two species is very difficult but fortunately *C. sensilis* is on the wing from late August through early October so any *Chytonix* outside that time period is *C. palliatricula*. Additionally, *C. palliatricula* has a form with large white spots on the forewing, *C. sensilis* can be slightly frosted in the same area but never looks like this form of *C. palliatricula*. Familiarity with the species allows most individuals to be sorted correctly but to be absolutely sure of the identification requires dissection or barcoding. Sexes similar but females often larger. Both morphological forms relatively common.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs statewide, from the Barrier Islands to the High Mountains

FLIGHT COMMENT: They are on the wing from April through September but are uncommon from August onward. The life history of this species would be an excellent study. There must be three or more broods and it would be interesting to see if the adult emergence is influenced by rains that occur after dry periods and elicit the emergence to so many woodland fungi.

HABITAT: This species has been recorded in nearly every habitat type in the state, from maritime scrub and forests on the barrier islands; peatlands, Longleaf Pine habitats, and swamp forests in the Outer Coastal Plain; dry to xeric sandhills in the Fall-line Sandhills; and both mesic to dry slopes and ridges in the Piedmont and Mountains. Habitats range from open, herb-dominated sites to closed canopy forests.

FOOD: Interestingly, no caterpillars of this common species have been located in the wild though they should be easy to find. Captive females will readily lay eggs and the hatching larvae can be reared on common grocery store mushrooms. Reportedly, smuts are also favored and the caterpillar develops very fast as one would expect if they favor newly emerged gilled fungi.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults come well to lights but only rarely (1 observation in NC) to bait

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S5]

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

COMMENTS: The statewide distribution, wide range of habitats, and high frequency and abundance of its occurrence indicates that this species is one of the most secure species in North Carolina