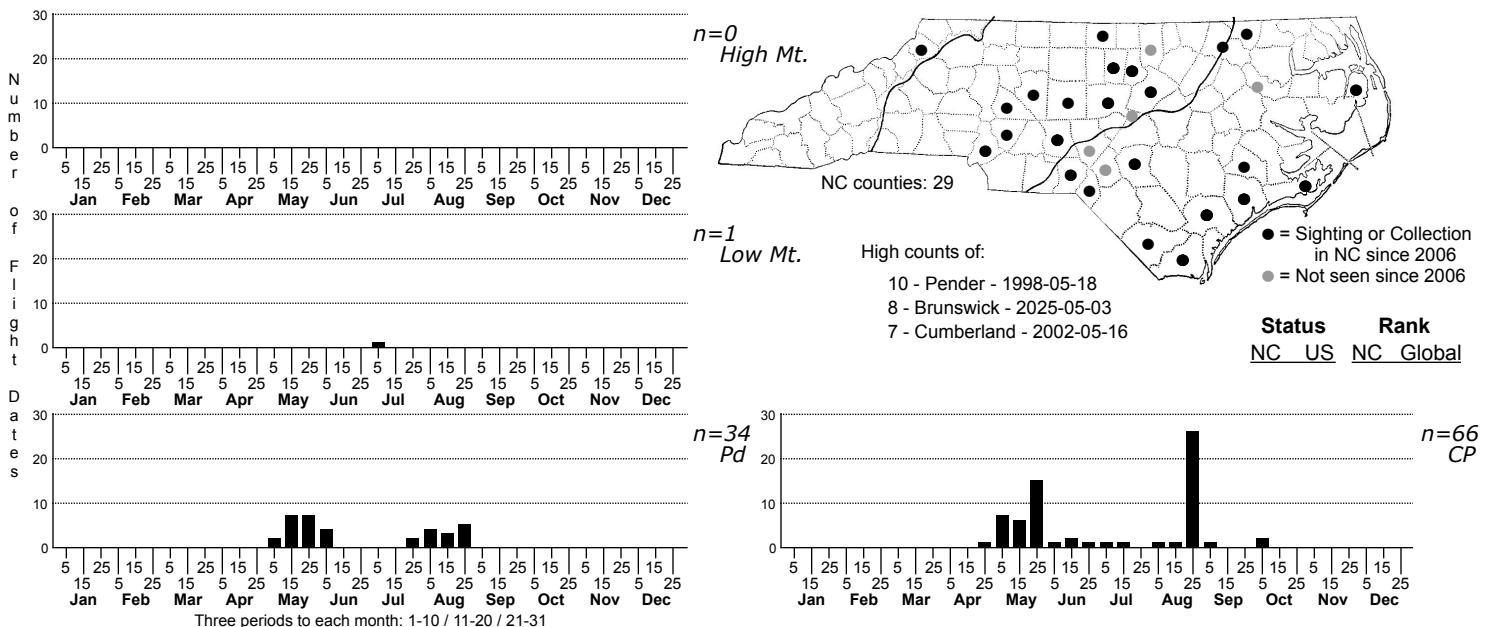


Amolita obliqua Oblique Grass Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Erebinae TRIBE: Ophiusini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The genus *Amolita* is currently placed in the Erebidae in the tribe Ophiusini together with such dissimilar genera as *Zale*, *Ophisma* and *Metria*. Previously it was thought to be near *Metalecra* and it likely will be moved again. The genus consists of 12 described species from the New World, five are known from the U.S. and three are found in North Carolina. However, the uncertainty surrounding the generic placement descends to the species level as well since many of our species appear to be complexes of multiple species.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Smith (1903); Forbes (1954)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1954)

ID COMMENTS: *Amolita obliqua* is a medium-small, pale cream Erebidae with two oblique lines in the outer part of the forewing. The head, thorax, and ground color of the forewings is yellowish cream (Smith, 1903), frequently flushed or shaded with pink or reddish, but not as extensively and evenly as in *A. roseola*. A dark fuscous stripe runs from the apex down to the inner margin, followed by an outer line that extends down from the outer margin below the apex, curving inward before the inner margin. A diffuse dark shade may also extend out from the base, as in *A. fessa*, but usually either crosses the inner oblique line or only weakly joins it, not forming an even upward curve as in *A. fessa* (Smith, 1903). The orbicular and reniform spots are represented by dark dots on the forewings. The hindwings are paler yellowish and immaculate. Sexes similar in pattern but the female is larger. In most cases, the parallel, oblique lines -- often shaded with red -- should distinguish this species from *A. fessa*, but specimens that have a smooth join between the basal line and the inner oblique line, with little extension of the oblique line below the join, should probably be dissected to determine their identity.

DISTRIBUTION: This species appears to be more confined to the Coastal Plain and eastern Piedmont than *Amolita fessa*. Mis-identifications could be clouding range differences and specimens of this genus from the western Piedmont and Mountains need to be verified by dissection or barcoding.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The phenology appears to be the same as for the other two species in the Coastal Plain, with two distinct flights

HABITAT: Our records for *Amolita obliqua* come from a wide variety of wetland habitats, including swamp forests and bottomlands; wet pine savannas and sandhill seeps; and shallow impoundments, including interdune ponds on barrier islands, beaver ponds, and reservoir shorelines. This range of habitats is very similar to that of *A. fessa* and the two species are often found together. *A. obliqua*, however, seems to be much more prevalent in open savanna and seepage habitats associated with Longleaf and Pond Pines. At least a few of our records appear to be associated with pocosins and other peatlands, where *A. fessa* appears to be absent.

FOOD: The Florida specimen described by Franclemont was reported as feeding on grass, but it is not clear if it was reared in captivity or found in the wild (Forbes, 1954). Species of graminoids are the more likely host plants, but *Carex* and other sedges are usually more prevalent in the habitats where this species has been recorded than grasses.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults readily come to light and can be flushed from wet savannas and other sedge-filled sites during the day.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4S5]

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

COMMENTS: *Amolita obliqua* appears to be somewhat more specialized in its habitats than *A. fessa*, but far less so than *A. roseola*, and occupies a much wider range in the state. Consequently, it appears to be fairly secure.