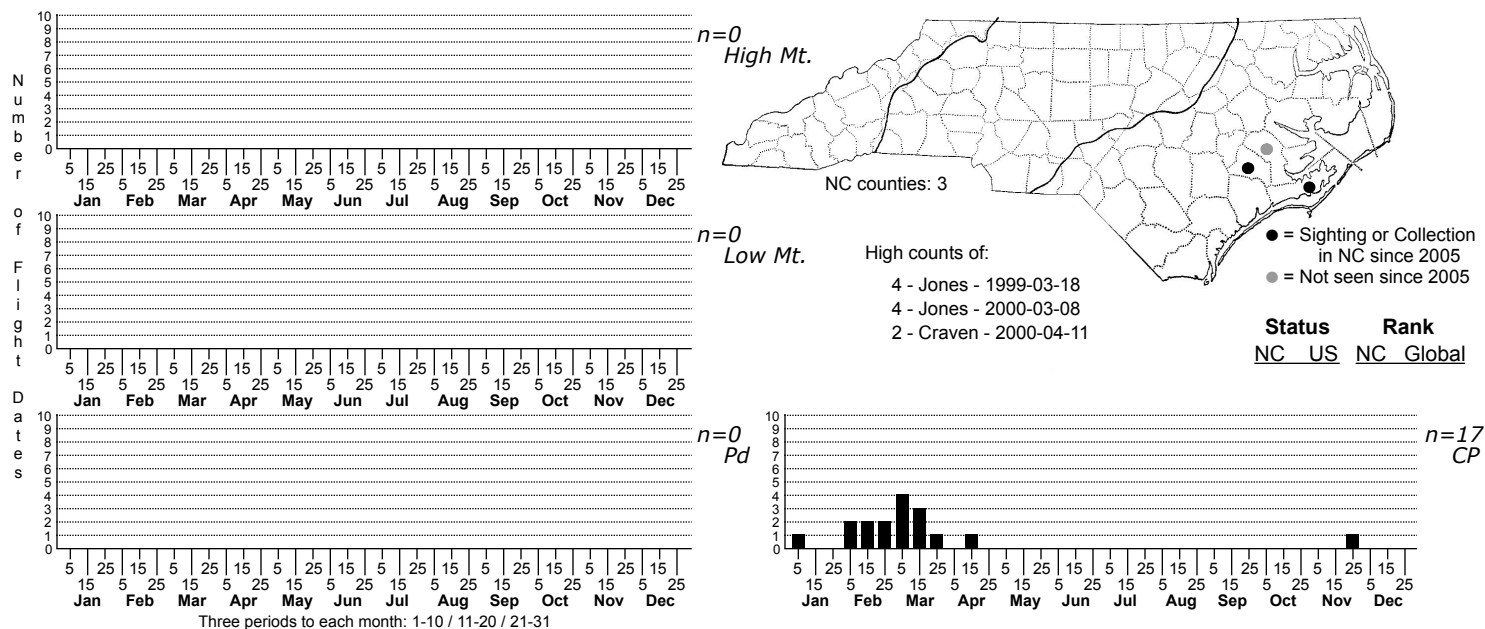


Pyreferra ceromatica Annotated Sallow



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Xylenini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of four species in this genus that occur in North America (Lafontaine and Schmidt, 2010), all of which have been recorded in North Carolina

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Schweitzer et al. (2011)

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

ID COMMENTS: A medium-sized Noctuid. The forewings and thorax are a bright, vinous red-brown, with a violet to blue iridescence, especially when fresh (Forbes, 1954). The postmedian is excurved, waved, and relatively indistinct, unlike hesperidago and citromba, which have straight and more narrowly defined postmedian lines. The orbicular and reniform are normal but are not strongly contrasting against the ground color. The hindwings are also reddish but somewhat paler than the forewings. However, the contrast between the fore and hindwings is less than in other species of *Pyreferra*.

DISTRIBUTION: Appears to be limited to southern portion of the Outer Coastal Plain

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, with adults emerging in November and overwintering in that stage; most records come from late winter and early spring

HABITAT: North Carolina records all come from stands of mesic hardwoods growing in ravines and bluffs located where rivers enter coastal sounds. Witch-hazel is present in these habitats but is otherwise fairly scarce in the Outer Coastal Plain.

FOOD: Larvae are apparently monophagous, feeding solely on American Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) (Forbes, 1954; Schweitzer et al., 2011; Wagner et al., 2011). In North Carolina, J.B. Sullivan documented a larva feeding on Witch-hazel.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Adults come well to both blacklights and bait. Larvae of *Pyreferra* are also fairly easy to find resting on the undersides of the leaves of their host plants (Schweitzer et al., 2011).

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GU S1S2

STATE PROTECTION: Listed as Significantly Rare by the Natural Heritage Program. That designation, however, does not confer any legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: This species has undergone a precipitous decline in the northern part of its range and is now considered historic in Canada, New England, the mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes states (Schweitzer et al., 2011). Since 1950, all records have come from the southern Atlantic and Gulf Coast States, with a large number coming from North Carolina, but even in our state, records come only from a small area in Craven and Jones Counties along the coast. The reasons for this decline are completely unknown (Schweitzer et al., 2011) but it does not appear to involve either host plant limitations or difficulties in sampling this species: even though it flies in late winter, it is relatively easy to observe. One factor in North Carolina is the possible isolation of its populations on just a few coastal river bluffs, which might have offered a refuge for this species if a disease or parasite spread through areas where Witch Hazel occurs more widely and continuously, i.e., the Mountains and Piedmont.