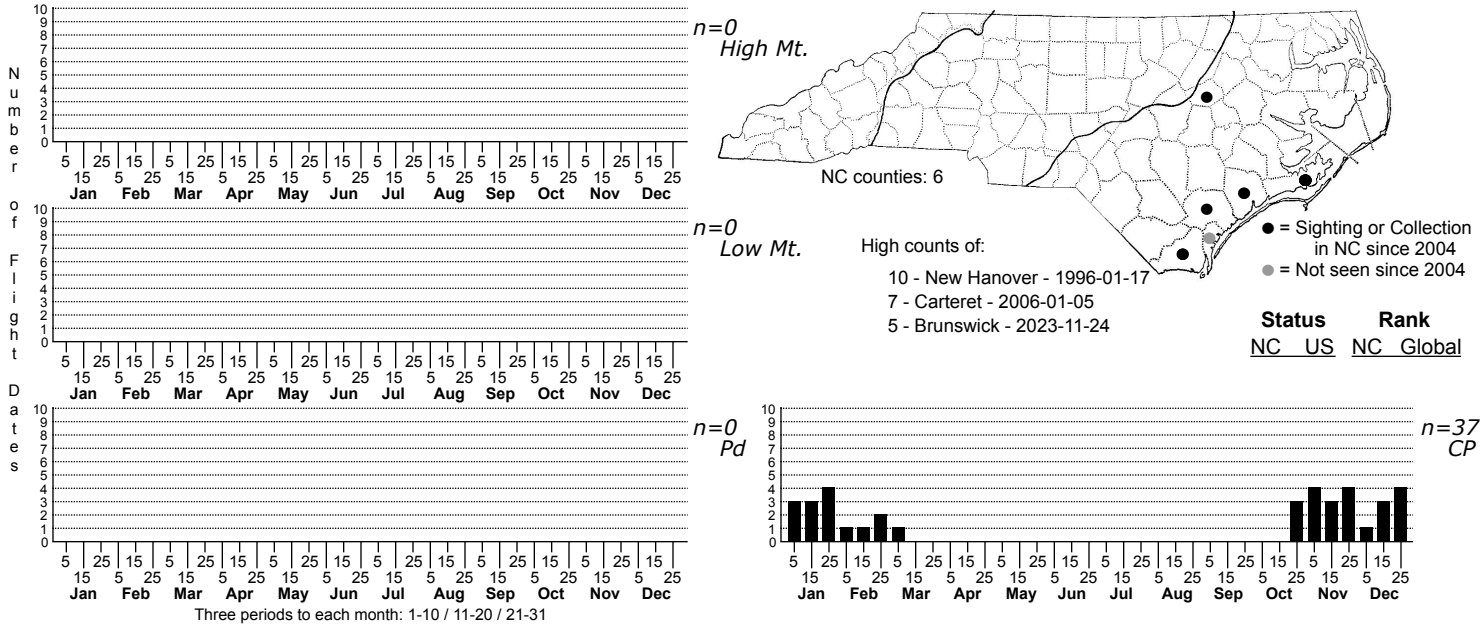
Metaxaglaea australis Southern Sallow



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Xylenini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of five species in this genus that occur in North America, all of which have been recorded in North Carolina.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Not in either field guide
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Schweitzer (1979)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Schweitzer (1979); Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: A medium-sized, brown Noctuid. Similar in pattern to several other species of Metaxaglaea, particularly viatica, with the ground color of the thorax and wings being usually a plain or leather brown. Externally, this species is distinguished by its smaller size: forewing length is usually less than 22mm (0.9") in both sexes whereas it is usually over 22mm in other species of Metaxaglaea and often over 25mm (Schweitzer, 1979). The forewings also tend to be somewhat broader than in the other species and the terminal line on the hindwing is usually more strongly dentate (Schweitzer, 1979).

DISTRIBUTION: All of our records come from the outer coastal plain, either from barrier islands or from mainland sites located within just a couple of miles from the coast.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, with adults flying from late October to early February.

HABITAT: All of our records come from coastal evergreen forest or scrub habitats, located on barrier islands or relict dunes located just inland from the coast.

FOOD: Presumed larvae of this species have been found feeding on Yaupon (Ilex vomitoria) (J.B. Sullivan, pers. obs.). These are currently being reared to confirm their identities, but Yaupon certainly fits the distribution of australis in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Like other Metaxaglaeas, this species appears to come well to both blacklights and bait.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GU [S2S3]

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

COMMENTS: This species appears to be strongly associated with maritime or coastal evergreen forests. As such, it is threatened by both coastal development, particularly on the barrier islands, and sea level rise.