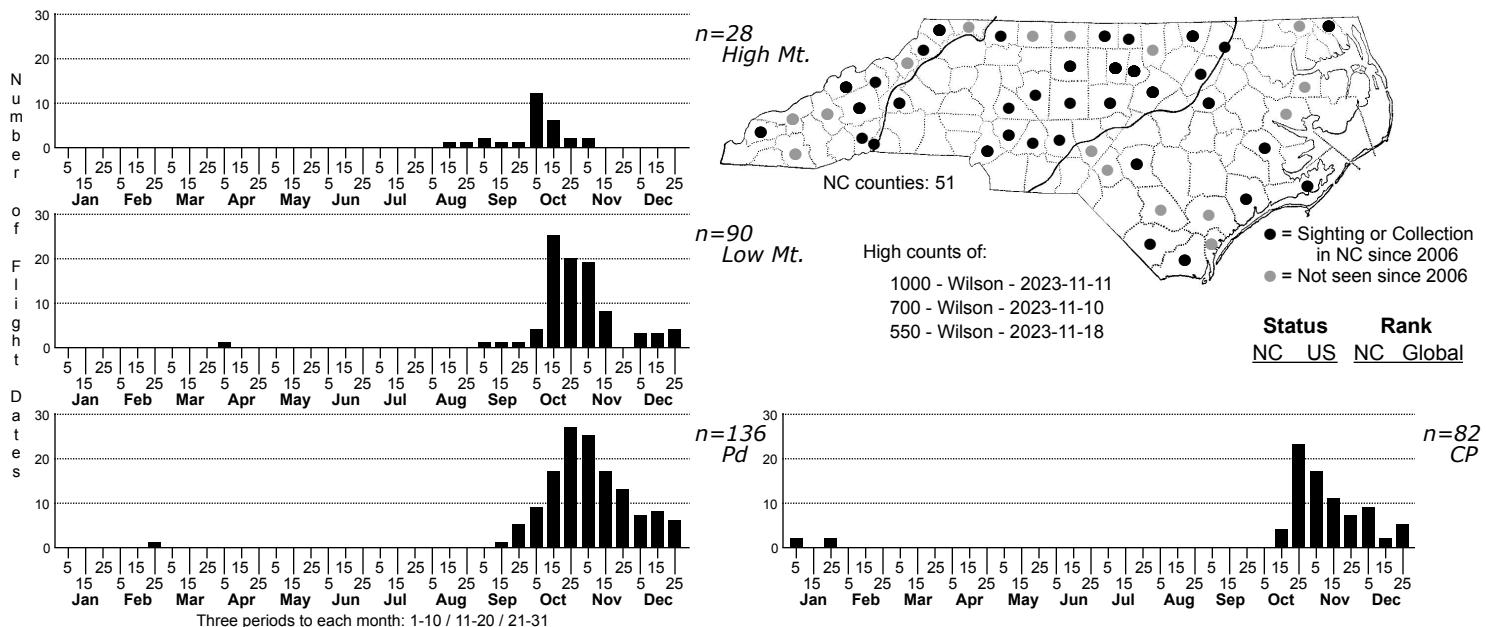


## *Sunira bicolorago* Bicolored Sallow



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Noctuinae TRIBE: Xylenini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: A genus of three North American species, one of which has been taken in North Carolina. There are scattered eastern records for *S. verberata*, a western species, which resembles *S. bicolorago* but has a pronounced, darkened reniform spot.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Wagner (2005); Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: Adults are usually easy to recognize by color, size and time of flight. However, the species can be quite variable and its flight period overlaps briefly with *Anathix ralla*, which is similar in size and coloration (see photo). The yellow-orange color of the adult perfectly matches many fall leaf colors providing excellent camouflage. Carefully mark the course of the postmedian line which is evenly curved in *A. ralla* but interrupted and represented as a series of black spots in this species. In addition, the subterminal line of *S. bicolorago* is well-defined, with pale coloration that is bordered inwardly by darker shading. In contrast, the subterminal line of *A. ralla* is represented as a series of dots. The overlap period is fairly brief, as *A. ralla* begins to fly about a month earlier. When they do overlap, identification can sometimes be challenging, particularly for worn specimens.

DISTRIBUTION: Found across the state, from the High Mountains to the Barrier Islands.

FLIGHT COMMENT: *Sunira* is the moth symbol of the approaching winter. Begins to fly in August in the Mountains and September over the rest of the state. Continues to fly in the Coastal Plain well into December.

HABITAT: Our records come primarily from hardwood-dominated forests, ranging from floodplains and lakeshores, to mesic slopes and dry summits. Almost none come from Longleaf Pine habitats, except where located close to floodplains or in areas where fire-suppression has allowed hardwoods to move in. None of our records come from Peatland habitats but there are at least a few from Maritime habitats.

FOOD: Larvae are polyphagous, with reported hosts including maple (*Acer*), poplar (*Populus*), cherry (*Prunus*), oak (*Quercus*), willow (*Salix*), and elm (*Ulmus*) (Wagner et al., 2011). Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) seems to be a favorite - in the early spring look for young larvae on emerging Red Maple buds. Older larvae are very difficult to locate and are known to feed on dead leaves. In North Carolina, a caterpillar was recorded feeding on White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Adults swarm to bait and are also attracted to light.

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: This species is widespread in North Carolina, occupies an extensive range of habitats, and feeds on common and/or ubiquitous host plants; it appears to be quite secure within the state.