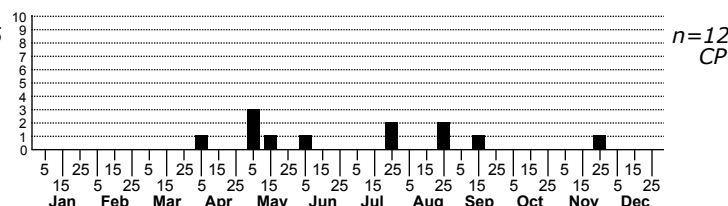
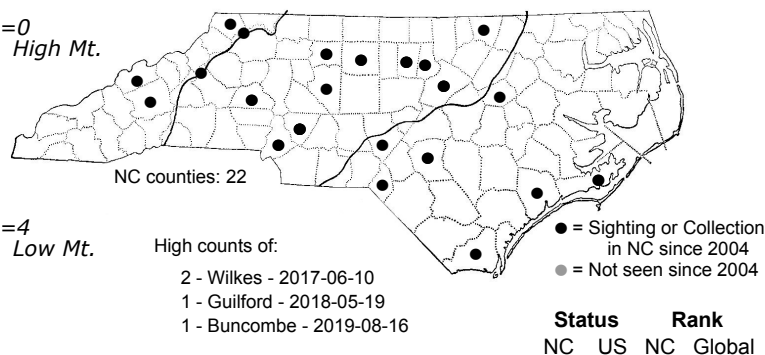
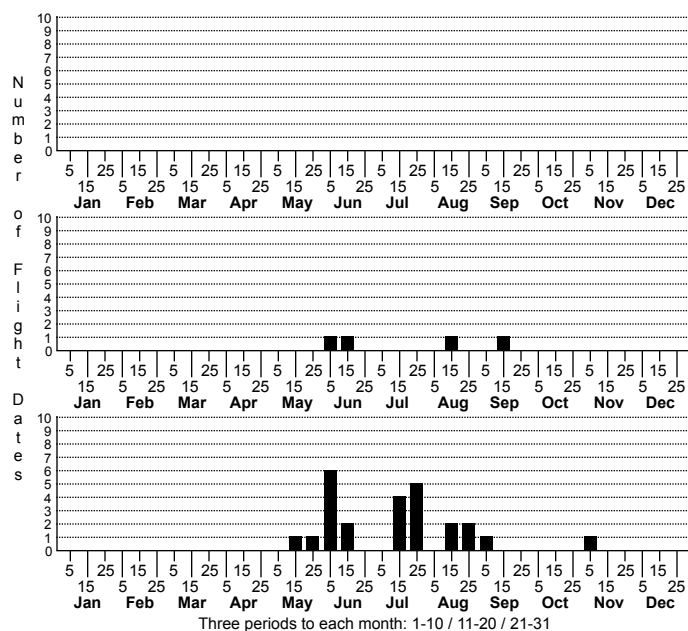


Psara obscuralis Obscure Psara Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Pyraustinae TRIBE: Spilomelini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS:

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: In this species the head, thorax, abdomen, and ground color of the forewing and hindwing are concolorous and typically a medium brown to yellowish-brown. All of the forewing marks are dark brown and include a mostly straight antemedial line that angles basally just before reaching the costa, a small and often inconspicuous orbicular spot, and a rectangular reniform spot with double bars projecting inward from the costa. The postmedial line projects inward from the costa at about four-fifths the wing length, then has a prominently toothed section with four or five teeth that bulge outward. From there the line projects basally to form a conspicuous loop whose apex nearly touches the reniform spot. The terminal end of the loop forms part of a conspicuous single tooth between the loop and the inner margin. The subterminal region often has diffuse dark shading between the veins, while the fringe is dark brown and adjoins a thin dark terminal line that is often broken. The hindwing is similar to the forewing, but lacks the antemedial line and is paler towards the base.

Psara obscuralis is sometimes confused with *Patania silicalis*, but the latter has a weakly toothed bulge on the postmedial line and the reniform is composed of a single line. It also resembles our *Hahncappia* species, but the latter lack the prominent teeth on the postmedial bulge and have a diffuse, dark-brown, subterminal band that is missing on *Psara obscuralis*.

DISTRIBUTION: *Psara obscuralis* is found in the eastern U.S. from southern New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania westward to Indiana, Missouri, central Kansas and eastern Nebraska. The range extends southward to southern Texas, the Gulf Coast states, southern Florida and Georgia. Populations that extend from extreme southern Texas through Central America may represent a cryptic species based on BOLD data. This species occurs statewide in North Carolina, but is relatively uncommon in the Blue Ridge.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults fly year-round in Florida and mostly from April through September farther north. As of 2023, our records range from early-May through late-November. Local populations appear to produce at least two generations per year in North Carolina.

HABITAT: This species is commonly found in disturbed habitats and in fragmented landscapes, particularly where mesic woodland edges and moist clearings support American Pokeweed. Most of our records are from semi-wooded residential neighborhoods.

FOOD: The hosts are poorly documented but including a species of *Amaranthus*, Sacred Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*), and American Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*; Heppner, 2007). American Pokeweed appears to be the primary host species based on several records from iNaturalist, BugGuide, and other internet resources. Ken Kneidel reared an adult in North Carolina from a larva in a leaf fold on American Pokeweed. The larvae also feed on Guinea Henweed (*Petiveria alliacea*) in Costa Rica, but the Central American populations of *Psara obscuralis* are genetically distinct and may represent a cryptic species.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: The adults are attracted to lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR [S3-S4]

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

COMMENTS: This species is fairly common throughout the state and appears to be reasonably secure given that it relies on American Pokeweed as a host plant.