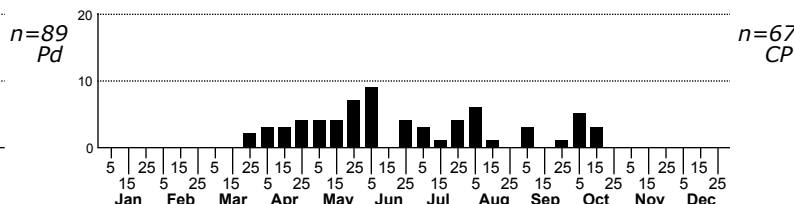
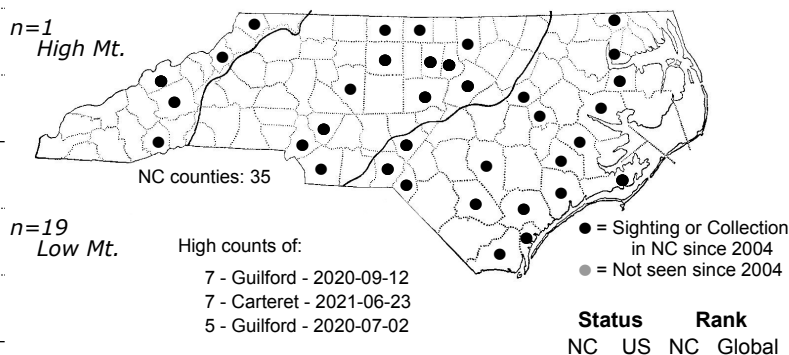
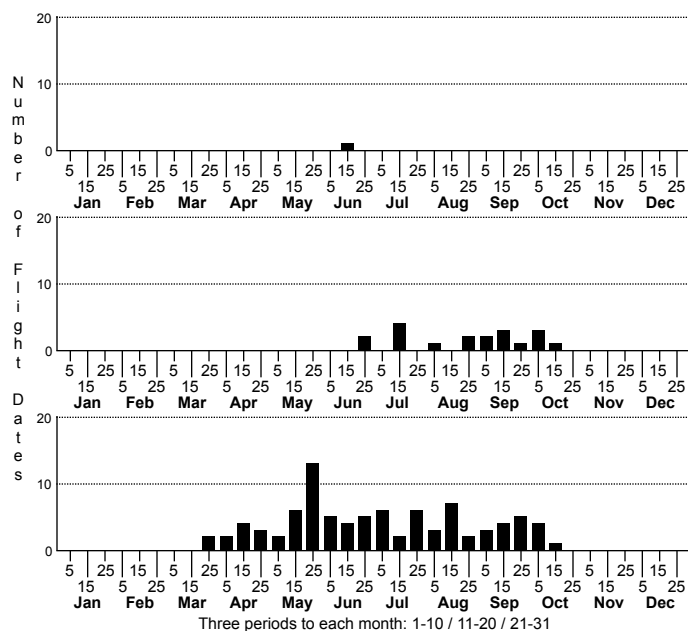


## *Elophila oblitalis* Waterlily Leafcutter Moth



FAMILY: Crambidae SUBFAMILY: Acentropinae TRIBE: Nymphulini

TAXONOMIC\_COMMENTS: The genus *Elophila* contains nearly 50 described species that occur on most continents worldwide. Nine species occur in North America -- including seven in North Carolina -- and all have aquatic larvae that feed on floating and submerged plants. The larvae live in cases that are constructed from cut-out portions of leaves or leaf fragments, with pupation occurring within the case. The larvae are gill-less and appear to obtain oxygen by storing air in their cases.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984; as *Synclita oblitalis*); Beadle and Leckie (2012; as *Synclita oblitalis*)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Munroe (1972)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Habeck and Cuda (2009)

ID COMMENTS: *Elophila oblitalis* is sexually dimorphic, with the males being smaller (forewing length = 5-6 mm), darker, and with proportionately wider forewings. The ground color of the forewing is fuscous and is obscurely variegated with brown (Munroe, 1972). A whitish, crescent-shaped, reniform spot is present on the forewings of both sexes. The females are larger (forewing length = 7-9 mm) and are lighter-colored. The forewing coloration and patterning varies, but most specimens have a grayish brown or orangish-brown ground that is overlain with varying amounts of darker dusting. This is often concentrated near the wing base, the middle, and the subterminal region to form diffuse dark bands. On some individuals the dark bands are margined with white scales on the apical margin.

DISTRIBUTION: *Elophila oblitalis* is widely distributed across the eastern US and adjoining areas of southern Canada. Populations that likely reflect introductions are present in western North America, particularly in the Pacific Northwest. In the US, population range from the New England states westward to the Dakotas and southward to southern Texas and southern Florida. This species occurs statewide in North Carolina.

FLIGHT COMMENT: The adults fly year-round in Florida and for progressively shorter periods as one moves north. The flight season in Alberta last around four months. As of 2023, our records extend from late-March to mid-October. Local populations presumably have two or more overlapping broods per year.

HABITAT: The aquatic larvae utilized a wide variety of habitats with good growths of aquatic plants. They have been found in both lentic and lotic systems.

FOOD: The larvae are highly polyphagous and have been found feeding on nearly 60 species of plants from 22 families and 40 genera (Heppner and Habeck, 1976; Stoops et al., 1998; Habeck and Cuda, 2009). Some representative genera include *Amaranthus*, *Azolla*, *Brasenia*, *Eichhornia*, *Eleocharis*, *Elodea*, *Hydrilla*, *Hydrocotyle*, *Lemna*, *Ludwigia*, *Marsilea*, *Myriophyllum*, *Nelumbo*, *Nuphar*, *Nymphaea*, *Nymphoides*, *Orontium*, *Pistia*, *Polygonum*, *Pontederia*, *Potamogeton*, *Sagittaria* and *Salvinia*.

OBSERVATION\_METHODS: The adults are attracted to UV-lights and the larvae can be collected by searching aquatic vegetation.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: GNR S4S5

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 common throughout most of the state, but locally restricted to where suitable aquatic breeding sites are present.