

RIDING'S PITCHER PLANT LOOPER MOTH

Exyra ridingsii

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Noctuidae

FNAI Ranks: G2G4/S2S3

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: none



Description: Adult: About 15-17 mm long, averaging slightly larger than other *Exyra* species. At rest, this moth appears to have a wing pattern of 3-4 bands of black over a light yellow background color. The area behind the head is black. Larvae: Difficult to differentiate from the related species *E. semicrocea*. See similar species for details. Caterpillars are a deep red with white rings between segments. The skin projections (lappets) of *E. ridingsii* are of similar size throughout the body and the head has black markings over a brown background. Pupae: About the same size as the adult, averaging slightly larger than other *Exyra* species. The pupae are wrapped in corky debris, as opposed to silk cocoons, and have a noticeable projection on the head used to puncture its cocoon.

Similar Species: There are two other *Exyra* moths. *E. fax* is the only member of the genus that is colored orange on the area behind the head and exclusively occupies *Sarracenia purpurea* and *S. rosea*. *E. semicrocea* is a generalist occupying all species of *Sarracenia*. Adults of both *E. ridingsii* and *E. semicrocea* are black on the area behind the head. *E. semicrocea* has two-tone wings at rest with the upper half being light yellow and the lower half being black. *E. semicrocea* caterpillars have skin projections that are longer on the abdomen than thorax and the head has black markings over a white background. The Half-Yellow (*Ponometia semiflava*) is similar in appearance but occupies drier habitats and lacks a black head.

Habitat: Exclusively uses *Sarracenia flava* so can be expected in the same habitats which include dome swamp, shrub bog, wet prairie, wet flatwoods. Can be displaced by the genus generalist *E. semicrocea* in locations where multiple pitcher plant species occur.

Riding's Pitcher Plant Looper Moth

Exyra ridingsii

Seasonal Occurrence: Adults are active from late March through the end of September and larvae may be found from late February through early May.

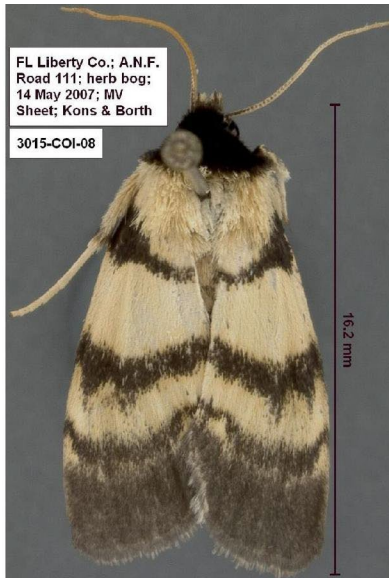
Florida Distribution: This species is known from most of the Panhandle.

Range-wide Distribution: Southeastern coastal plain from southern Virginia south to northern Florida and southwestern Alabama.

Conservation Status: Not protected at the federal or state level. Prescribing fires during the growing season will ensure that local populations are not extirpated as the larvae overwinter in the Yellow Pitcher Plant (*Sarracenia flava*).

Protection and Management: To maintain high quality habitat for its host plant *Sarracenia flava*, prescribed fires should occur every 2-3 years.

References: Folkerts & Folkerts 1996, Jones 1921



© Hugo L. Kons, Jr.



© David L. Wagner