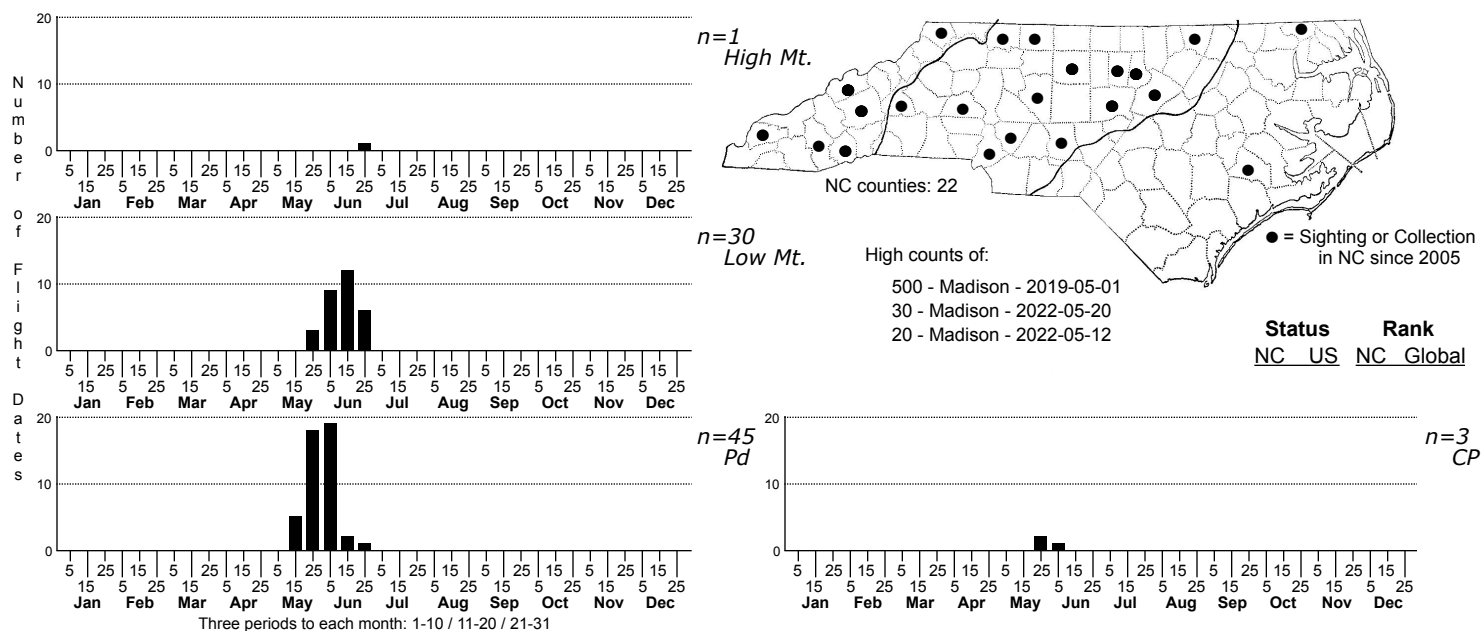


Yponomeuta multipunctella American Ermine Moth



FAMILY: Yponomeutidae SUBFAMILY: Yponomeutinae TRIBE: [Yponomeutinae]

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: *Y. multipunctella* is one of five species of *Yponomeuta* that occur north of Mexico. Three North American species (*Y. euonymella*, *Y. leucothorax*, and *Y. semialba*) are no longer recognized and are treated as *Y. multipunctella* (Lewis and Sohn, 2015). A fourth species (*Y. atomocella*) was transferred to the genus *Prays*. Four of the five currently recognized North American species of *Yponomeuta* are introduced, and some have become defoliating pests of apples, cherries and ornamental *Euonymus* species.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Lewis and Sohn (2015); microleps.org

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: Adults are white with 3-4 rows of black dots. *Y. cagnagella* is an introduced species that resembles *Y. multipunctella*, but has fewer black dots, particularly near the middle of the forewing. This species is a pest on ornamental *Euonymus* species and was first recorded in North America from Ontario in 1967. *Y. cagnagella* has since spread to the northern US and south to Delaware and Maryland. It could potentially reach North Carolina in the future.

DISTRIBUTION: Almost all records are from the Piedmont and Blue Ridge where the host species are most common.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Single-brooded, with a peak in June.

HABITAT: Populations are restricted to areas that support the host plants, which are *Euonymus* species (Sperling et al. 1995, Ulenberg 2009). The primary host is the American Strawberry-bush (*Euonymus americanus*). This species is widespread in mesic to rich forests, but also occurs to a lesser extent in both floodplain forests and drier pine-oak and oak-hickory forests. Two other native *Euonymus* (*E. atropurpureus*; *E. obovatus*) are uncommon and presumably serve as secondary hosts where local populations occur. Several species of *Euonymus* from Europe and Asia are widely planted as ornamentals in the eastern US, but *Y. multipunctella* does not use these as host plants.

FOOD: Larvae feed on *Euonymus*, including American Strawberry-bush (*Euonymus americanus*), Eastern Wahoo (*E. atropurpureus*), and Running Strawberry-bush (*E. obovatus*) (Godfrey et al., 1987; Beadle & Leckie, 2012). In North Carolina, larvae have been recorded feed on American Strawberry-bush, and have often been found pupating in the leaves of nearby plants.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: This species is easily detected by examining *Euonymus americanus* in early spring for the distinctive communal webs. The adults readily come to black lights.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 [S4S5]

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

COMMENTS: The American Ermine Moth is rather common in the Piedmont and Blue Ridge, but populations have undoubtedly been adversely affected by White-Tailed Deer. Deer feed heavily on the primary host plant (*E. americanus*) and can eliminate or nearly eliminate local populations of the host plant where grazing pressure is high. *Yponomeuta cagnagella* is an introduced species that specializes on *Euonymus* and could potentially compete with *Y. multipunctella*. To date, *Y. cagnagella* is only known to feed on introduced ornamental *Euonymus* and has not shifted to native species.