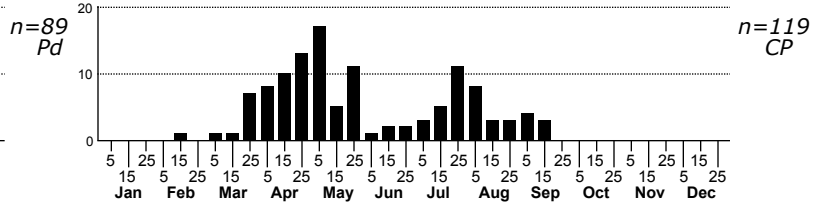
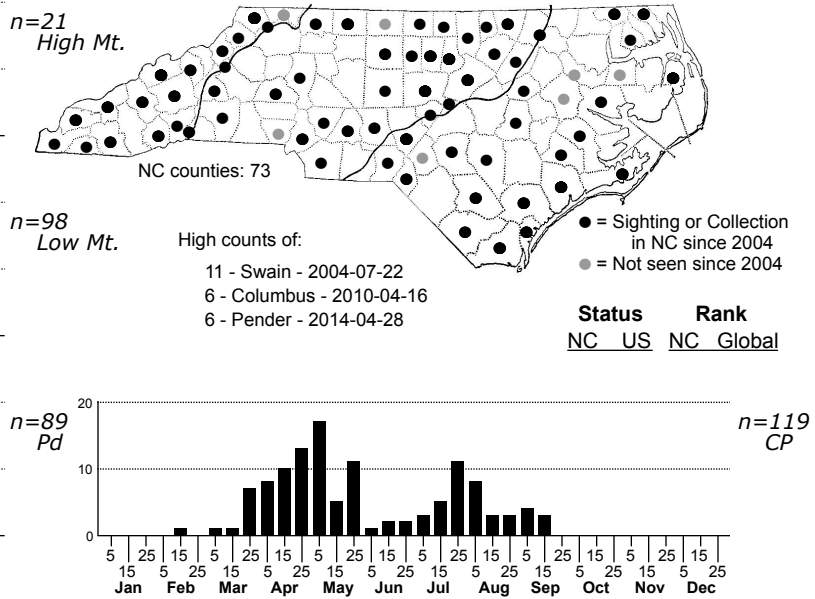
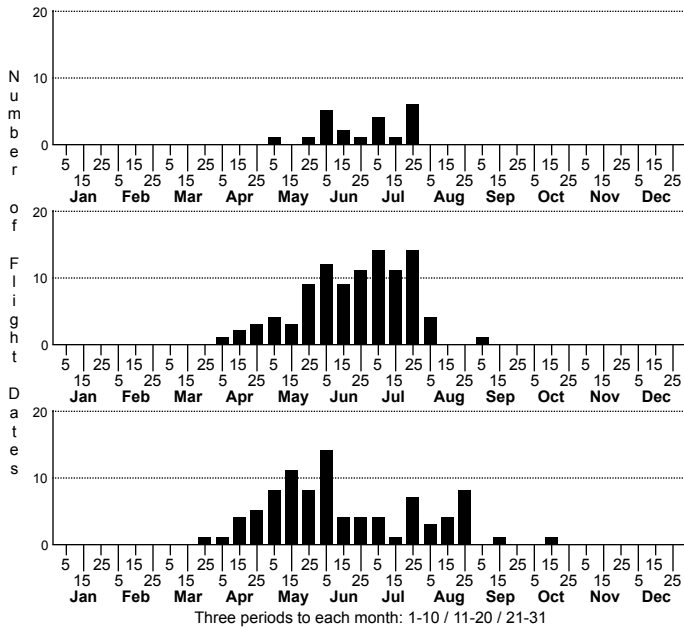


# *Antheraea polyphemus* Polyphemus Moth



FAMILY: Saturniidae SUBFAMILY: Saturniinae TRIBE: Attacini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The only member of its genus in the eastern United States (*Antheraea oclea* occurs in Arizona and New Mexico -- Tuskes et al., 1996)

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

ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1923), Ferguson (1972), Tuskes et al. (1996)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1923), Ferguson (1972), Covell (1984), Tuskes et al. (1996), Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: Adults are unmistakable. With a wingspan of 4-6 inches, this is one of our largest native moths. Its yellowish-brown or tan color and large elliptical eyes-spots distinguish it from the similar-sized *Cecropia* Moth, which has red bands on its wings and body and has crescent-shaped discal spots.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs state-wide (Brimley, 1938)

FLIGHT COMMENT: Appears to be single-brooded in the mountains but shows a distinctly bimodal flight pattern in the Coastal Plain and possibly the Piedmont.

HABITAT: Occurs in virtually all types of forests in the state, from maritime forests on the barrier islands (e.g., Fort Macon) to the high elevation forests of the mountains (e.g., Great Smoky Mountains National Park). It is also frequently encountered in wooded residential areas.

FOOD: Feeds on many species of hardwood trees and shrubs, but not on pines as has been previously reported (D. Schweitzer, pers. comm. to S. Hall). Brimley (1938) reported that it feeds primarily on elm and maple in North Carolina. Wagner (2005) stated that favored host plants include members of the birch, rose, and willow families (Wagner, 2005); Tuskes et al. (1996) also list oak as a favorite. Other commonly used host plants include ash, dogwood, hazel, and hickory (see Ferguson, 1972, for a more extensive list). As of 2023, we have observed it feeding on oak, maple, hickory, elm, chestnut, hornbeam, and rose, and have found cocoons on a wide range of other plants.

OBSERVATION\_METHODS: Comes well to 15 watt UV lights and also to incandescent light to some extent. Adults do not feed and consequently are not attracted by bait. Larvae can be detected in low trees and shrubs through their droppings. Cocoons can often be found attached to low trees and shrubs. Larvae are easy to rear in captivity (see Tuskes et al., 1996).

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 [S5]

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

COMMENTS: Populations are locally vulnerable to the effects of weather, outbreaks of disease, parasites, and predators, and to the effects of pesticides. However, given the commonness of their host plants, wide habitat range -- including suburban areas -- and statewide distribution, this species can easily recover from those losses and appears to be secure in the state for the foreseeable future. In the Northeast, this is one of the few species of Saturniid that appears to be increasing in number (Wagner, 2012).