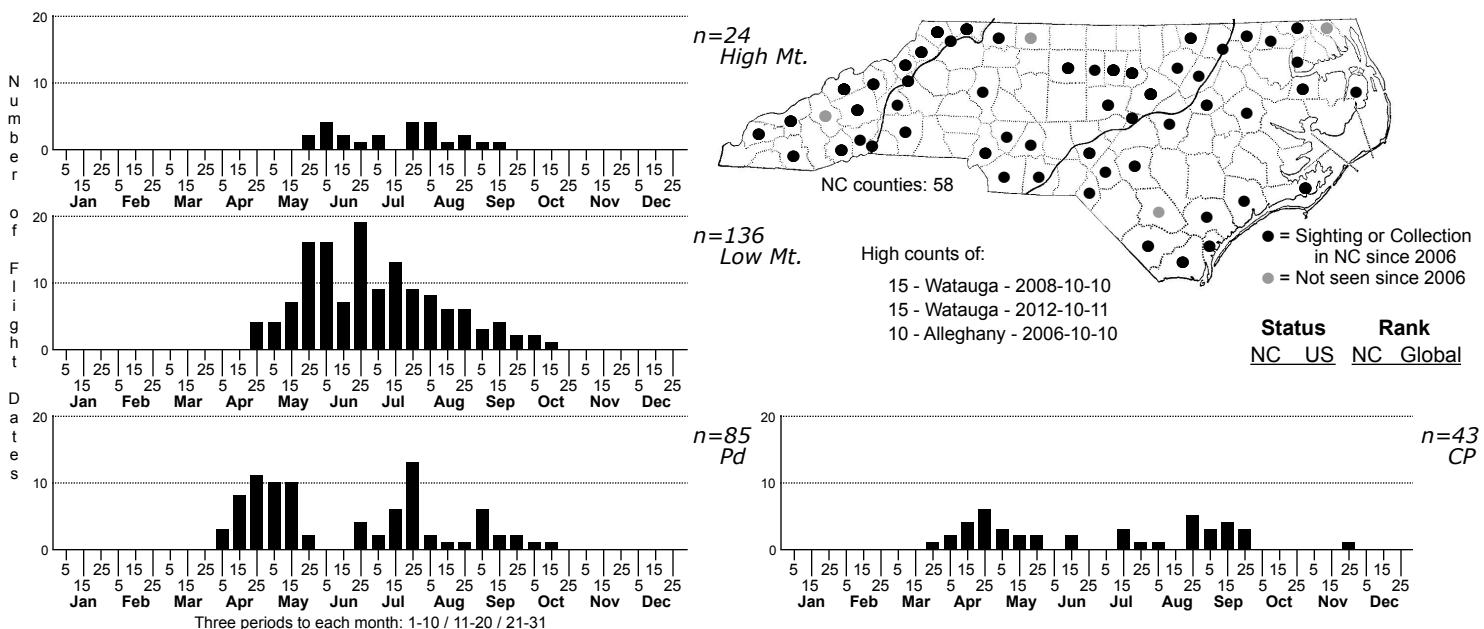


Pyrrharctia isabella Isabella Tiger Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The only member of its genus north of Mexico

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1960); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: The forewings are pointed at the apex and colored apricot-yellow to buff-brown, marked to a varying extent with angulate rows of darker spots or lines. Hind-wings are contrastingly light: salmon-tinted in females and pale whitish in males, also marked with darker spots. Head and thorax are darker brown; the abdomen is colored similarly to the forewings and has a series of dark, dorsal spots. Legs are black with bright scarlet tibiae.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide

FLIGHT COMMENT: Reported to have two broods over most of the East (Forbes, 1960; Wagner, 2005). Our records may be consistent with that pattern but adults appear to be present throughout most of the growing season.

HABITAT: Wagner (2005) lists habitats as including "fields, bottomlands, woodlands, and forests." Our records come primarily from open areas, ranging from beach dunes to high-elevation fields and clearings; larvae are often seen in old-field habitats. We have very few records, however, from naturally open Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, and sandhills, or from peatland habitats, possibly indicating a lack of fire-tolerance. On the other hand, we have at least some records from forested habitats, although usually where fields are located nearby or where there is a dense ground-cover of herbaceous species (e.g., in forested sedge-mires in the lower Roanoke River floodplain).

FOOD: Larvae are highly polyphagous, feeding on many low-growing forbs and graminoids (including many crop species), as well as woody plants, including some tree species (Wagner, 2005). Reported hosts include maple (*Acer*), asters, birch (*Betula*), Cantaloupe (*Cucumis melo*), cotton (*Gossypium*), grasses, sunflower (*Helianthus*), lettuce (*Lactuca*), Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), beans (*Phaseolus*), Garden Pea (*Pisum sativum*), plantain (*Plantago*), Peach (*Prunus persica*), Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), blackberry (*Rubus*), meadowsweet (*Spiraea*), dandelion (*Taraxacum*), clover (*Trifolium*), elm (*Ulmus*), and Corn (*Zea mays*) (Tietz, 1972; Covell, 1984; Wagner, 2005; Robinson et al., 2010). While larvae are commonly encountered and easily recognizable, they frequently wander from their host plant and actual feeding records are relatively uncommon. Of the hundreds of iNaturalist records from North Carolina, most larvae are not on plants, but of those that are, grasses, dandelion, clover, and other low, weedy plants seem to be the most common. There is a BugGuide record (Eric Noguchi, 2020) of a larva feeding on *Lantana* in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes moderately well to blacklights but not to bait. Larvae are active during the day, and are especially conspicuous when seeking sites for pupation or overwintering.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S5]

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

COMMENTS: Widely distributed across the state, common, and using a broad range of open habitats, including disturbed areas, this species appears to be secure within the state. It may be somewhat vulnerable, however, to changes in farming practices that reduce the amount of fallow land, including old-field habitats, or to the use of herbicides and pesticides applied both to croplands and tree farms, including recent clearcuts.