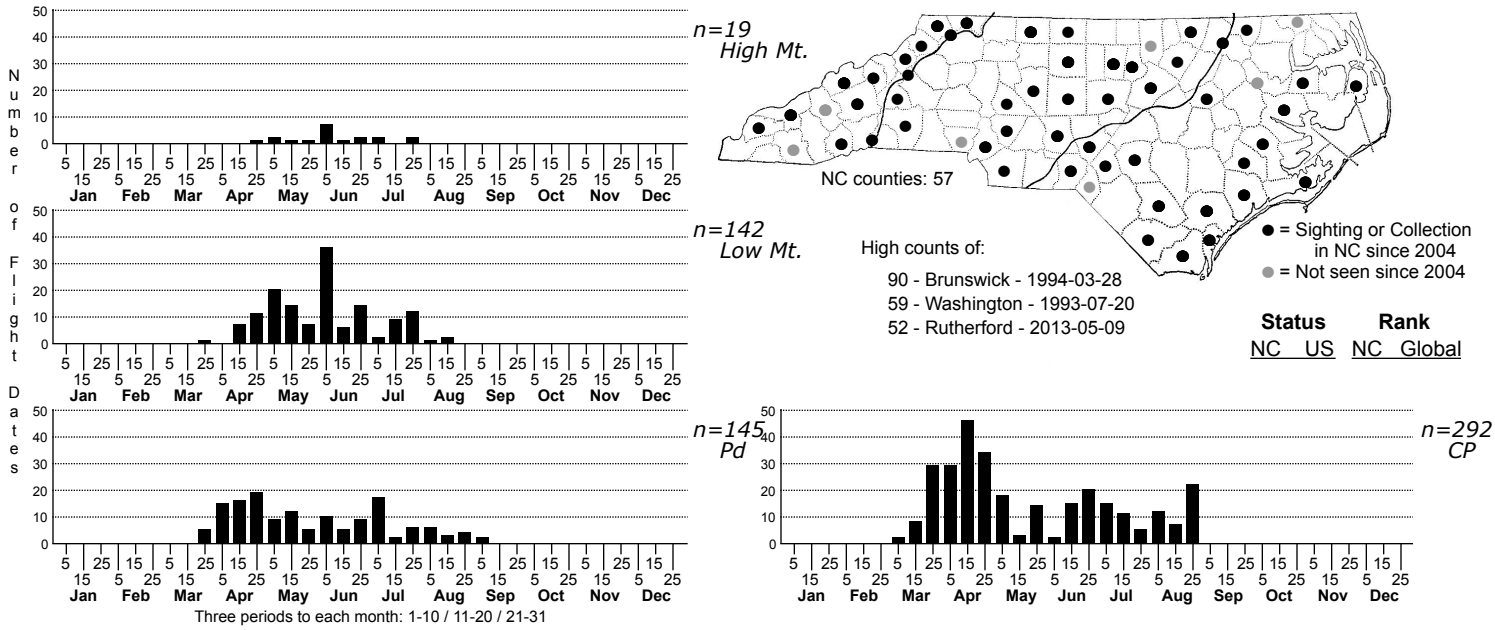
Spilosoma congrua Agreeable Tiger Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of eight species in this genus found in North America, four of which have been recorded in North Carolina

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1960); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: White with a variable amount of black spotting, ranging from all white to moderately spotted. In more heavily marked individuals, a broken postmedian line is present with spots also located in the medial and sub-terminal areas. The abdomen is pure white, which distinguishes congrua from most other species of Spilosoma in our area -- the others have patterns of black spots and yellow or orange patches on the upper side of their abdomens. In much of the state, photographs that show the abdomen can be used to distinguish between these species, although in the Mountains, latipennis -- which also has an all white abdomen -- can only be reliably separated from congrua by the color of the fore-legs. Hyphantria cunea is very similar in coloration to S. congrua but is usually much smaller and slimmer and occasionally much more heavily spotted. The antennal shaft in Hyphantria is typically black, whereas it is usually white in Spilosoma species.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults are present throughout most of the growing season, with perhaps three peaks in abundance in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain

HABITAT: Occurs in a wide variety of open and forested habitats across the state, including dune grasslands on the barrier islands (at least at Jockey's Ridge); Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, and sandhills; peatlands; floodplains; and mesic-to-dry hardwood forests in the Piedmont and Mountains.

FOOD: Polyphagous, like other members of this genus, feeding on a wide range of herbaceous and woody plants (Forbes, 1960; Wagner, 2005).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes well to blacklights but not at all to bait

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: This is one of our most abundant and ubiquitous species, occurring in most open and wooded habitats across the state. It appears to be quite secure.