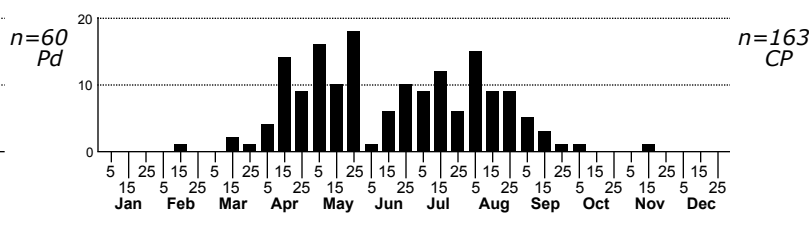
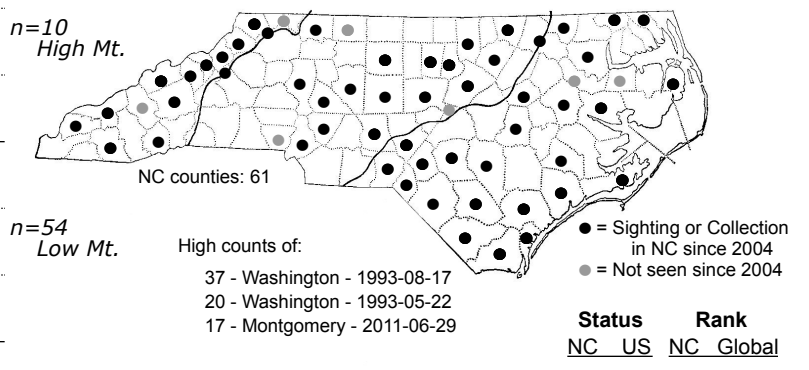
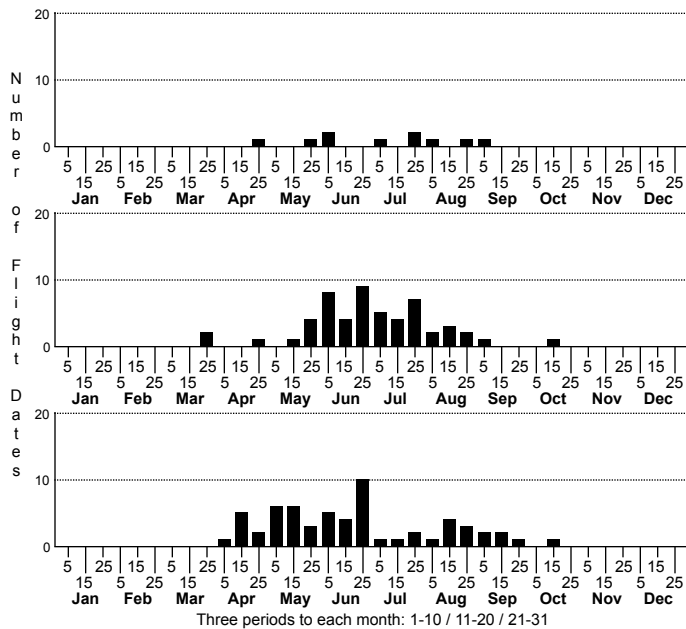


Spilosoma virginica Virginian Tiger Moth



FAMILY: Erebiidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of eight species in this genus that occur north of Mexico and one of four species found in North Carolina

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: This species has nearly all white wings, with usually just a few small black dots on the forewing (often just a dot at the lower angle of the cell) and just one or two spots on the hindwing (Forbes, 1960). *Spilosoma virginica* can be distinguished from *S. latipennis* by the yellow rather than pink hair on the fore-legs and by a pattern of yellow patches and black spots on the upperside of the abdomen. The abdominal pattern also distinguishes *S. virginica* from *S. congrua* and *Hyphantria cunea*, both of which have pure white abdomens and are often much more heavily spotted. *Spilosoma dubia* is much more heavily marked on the forewings with black spots, but has a similar pattern of yellow and black patches on the abdomen, although usually more obscured by a layer of longer white hair. *Estigmene acrea*, another white tiger moth with black spots on its forewings, is much bigger, longer-winged, and usually more heavily spotted than *S. virginica*.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide

FLIGHT COMMENT: Appears to be present throughout most of the growing season, with two or three peaks in activity in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain

HABITAT: Wagner (2005) lists fields, gardens, bottomlands, woodlands, and forests as habitats used by this species. In North Carolina, it occurs in a wide variety of open and forested habitats, including dune grasslands and maritime forests on the barrier islands; Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, and sandhills; peatlands; floodplains; and mesic- to dry-hardwood forests.

FOOD: Polyphagous, like other members of this genus, feeding on a wide range of herbaceous and woody plants (Forbes, 1960; Wagner, 2005). As of 2024, we have feeding records for White Sweetclover (*Melilotus albus*), a beggartick (*Bidens* sp.), a joe-pye-weed (*Eutrochium* sp.), a wild petunia (*Ruellia* sp.), a willow (*Salix* sp.), Wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*), Giant Ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*) and a wisteria (*Wisteria* sp.).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: This species comes well to black lights, with up to 37 having been collected in a single trap; not recorded at 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.