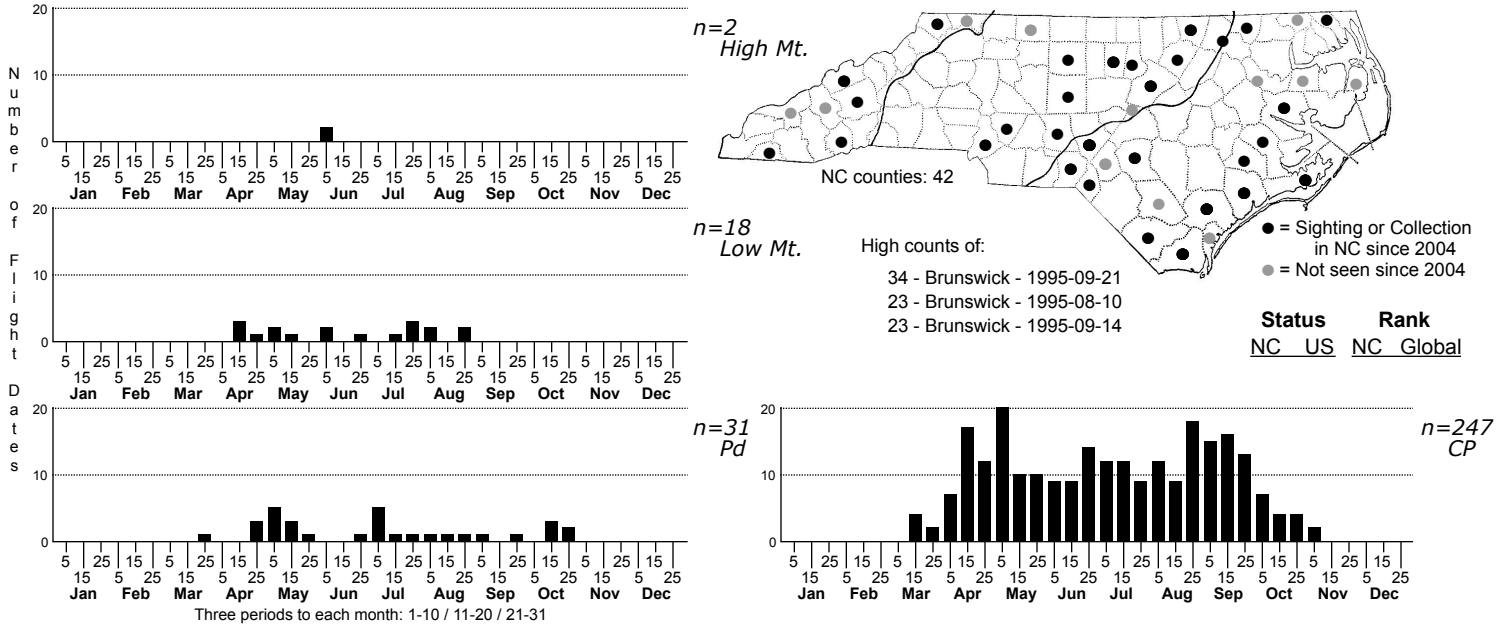
Apantesis vittata Banded Tiger Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of four species in this genus that occur in North America, all of which are found in North Carolina

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984)
ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: (Larval descriptions appear to be lacking)

ID COMMENTS: Species of Apantesis and Grammia resemble one another, but Apantesis are generally smaller and the the pattern of yellow lines is usually much more reduced, with the median, lower portion of the post-median, and fine vein lines always missing in Apantesis; a good quality photograph showing the forewing pattern is usually enough to distinguish between these genera. However, the hindwings must also be visible to distinguish between the species of Apantesis, and even then only the males can usually be diagnosed; photographs must show the hindwings to be acceptable as records for this genus.

Male vittata are usually recognizable by having red hindwings with a broad, confluent band of black in the sub-terminal area. In carlotta and phalerata, the color of the male hindwings is usually pale yellow or orange, or cream-color with a reddish wash, and the black area in the sub-terminal is virtually always broken into discrete spots. Male nais that have a bright yellow hindwing with large subterminal spots are easy to distinguish from vittata. However, nais also has forms that have reddish or reddish yellow hindwings, some with broadly confluent subterminal black bands; while noticeably larger in some cases, these forms can be difficult to identify, as can specimens of vittata that have some yellow shading in their hindwings and have their sub-terminal bands more broken into separate spots. Unfortunately, dissection does not provide a more definitive identification: the features of the valves and aedeagus in vittata, nais, and carlotta are all similar, or show similar patterns of variation. Females of vittata are similar to those of phalerata and nais, having a highly reduced set of pale lines on the forewings and broad, confluent black bands along the outer and inner margins of the hindwing. All three of these species can also have red or pink in the medial and basal areas of the hindwing and it is probably better to rely on males -- which are more often captured in any case -- for identifications.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide

FLIGHT COMMENT: Possibly has three peaks in activity but is present essentially throughout the growing season in the Coastal Plain

HABITAT: The vast majority of our records come from Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, and sandhills. Other records come from dry upland forests but only a few from floodplain forests and just one from barrier island dune grasslands; none of our records are from pure peatland habitats (i.e., located well away from Longleaf Pine communities).

FOOD: Probably polyphagous, feeding on a wide range of plants. Beadle and Leckie (2012) list dandelion, and Robinson et al. (2010) list plantain, but it is unclear whether this is based on ex ovo rearing or actual feeding in the wild. We do not have any feeding records in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes moderately well to blacklights, with up to 34 collected in a single trap; no records come from 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: Although apparently less generalized than A. phalerata, this species occupies a wide range of habitats and is broadly distributed across the entire state. Appears to be quite secure.