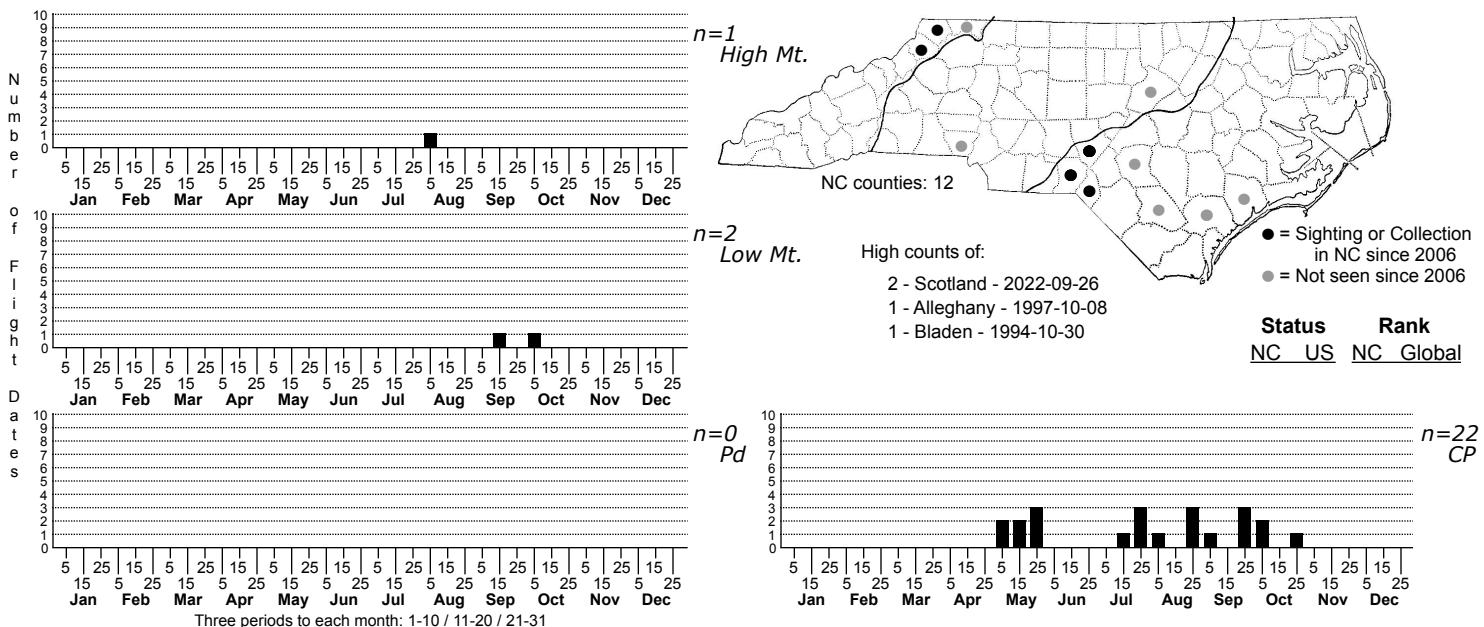


# *Apantesis phyllira* Phyllira Tiger Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: The genus *Apantesis* is represented by 43 species in North America, including 13 species in North Carolina.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960); Schmidt (2009)

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

ID COMMENTS: A medium-sized, boldly marked Tiger Moth that is fairly easy to identify based on good quality photographs showing both the fore- and hindwings. Both sexes are similar to male *A. placentia* but are slightly smaller and narrower-winged. Hind-wings are crimson, with a prominent black spot in the medial area and with a row of large spots in the sub-terminal area, similar to that in *A. parthenice* but contrasting with the much thinner line of *A. placentia*. The form typically found in our area lacks fine vein lines on the forewings, although forms with these lines -- formerly identified as *A. oithonia* -- can occur in all populations of this species (see Schmidt, 2009). Individuals with that pattern are similar to *A. parthenice*, but are much smaller (in our area) and possess a pinkish rather than cream color on the undersides of the forewings; the post-median is also much straighter in *A. phyllira* than in *A. parthenice*. Typical individuals possess broad yellow bands (using the terminology of Schmidt, 2009) along the sub-cubital, medial, post-medial, and sub-terminal lines, and variably along the costa and inner margin. These bands are much better developed than in *A. figurata* (which also differs in hindwing pattern) but are comparable to those found in male *A. placentia*. The medial line, however, is more curved in *A. phyllira*, particularly towards the costa and meets the costa at an acute angle, unlike that of *A. placentia*, where the medial is straight and meets the costa at a right angle (Forbes, 1960; Covell, 1984). The distance between the costal intersections of the medial and post-medial lines is only about 2x the distance between the intersections of the medial and post-medial with the sub-cubital, whereas it is about 3-4x the distance in *placentia* (Schmidt, 2009). Schmidt also notes that the last abdominal segment is black and pale in *A. phyllira* but solid black in *A. placentia*.

DISTRIBUTION: May occur sparsely over much of the state but has not yet been recorded in the northern Coastal Plain, southern mountains, or from the Outer Banks and other barrier islands

FLIGHT COMMENT: Probably has two to three flights in the Coastal Plain but possibly just one in the Mountains.

HABITAT: Schmidt (2009) states that "*Grammia (Apantesis) phyllira* occurs in dry, open woodland and grassland", including sandy prairie habitats in western Canada. The majority of our records come from Longleaf Pine flatwoods and sandhills -- the drier extremes of Longleaf habitats. Records from wetter savannas and sandhill seepage bogs -- representing the wetter extreme -- on the other hand are lacking. Habitat was not recorded in the historic records from the Piedmont. In the Mountains, it may be associated with old pastures along the New River, possibly associated with sandy soils.

FOOD: Members of this genus are highly polyphagous, feeding on a wide range of herbaceous plants, with dicots possibly preferred (Schmidt, 2009). Reported hosts include lupine (*Lupinus*) and Corn (*Zea mays*) (Tietz, 1972).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Appears to come sparsely to blacklights, almost always as single individuals. The adult mouthparts are non-functional (Singer, 2000, cited in Schmidt, 2009), so they do not come to bait.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 S3

STATE PROTECTION: Listed as Significantly Rare in North Carolina by the Natural Heritage Program; probably should be moved to the Watch List. It has no legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: Uncommon to rare. Apparently specialized on Longleaf Pine habitats in the Coastal Plain but its distribution in the Blue Ridge is less clear where it appears to be associated with old pastures. Distribution and habitat preferences need to be better understood before an accurate assessment can be made of its conservation status.