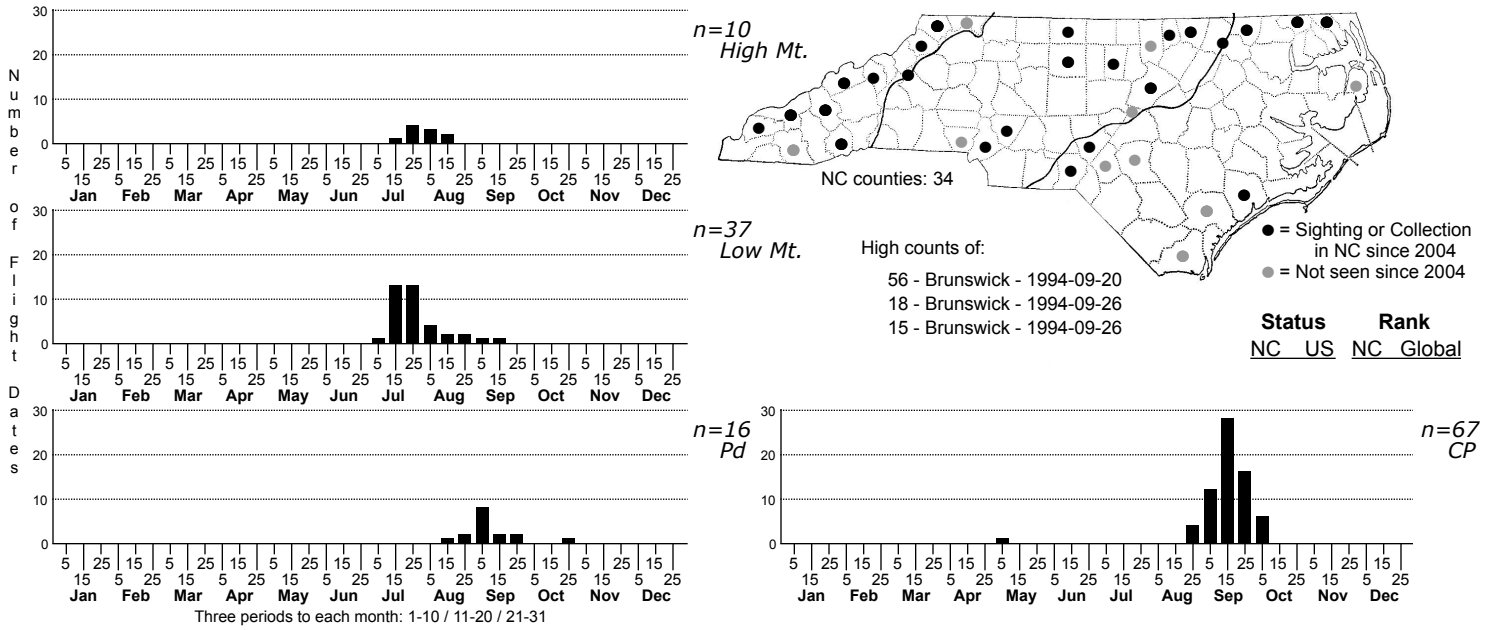
Apantesis virgo Virgin Tiger Moth



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. Our populations may all belong to subspecies gigas, recently described by Schmidt (2009). This form is much larger and more intensely colored than the nominate subspecies, which occurs across Canada and extends southward in the East to at least West Virginia.

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 boldly marked Tiger Moth and the largest species in this genus. Easily recognizable from a good quality photograph where both the hindwings and forewings are in view. The hindwings are usually red or pink (rarely yellow) and have a row of black spots located along both the outer margin and in the ante-median area, the second of which is missing in the similarly colored A. parthenice. The forewings are black with both narrow yellow lines along the veins and a set of broader yellow bands running longitudinally and transversely. In A. virgo, the post-median line (terminology following Schmidt, 2009) is strongly bent at the middle, similarly to A. anna but contrasting with A. parthenice, whose post-median is much straighter. In A. virgo, the line running along the median vein is usually wider than the one along the anal vein, whereas in A. parthenice (and apparently A. anna), these two lines are both equally thin (Schmidt, 2009).

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide except possibly on the Outer Banks and other barrier islands

FLIGHT COMMENT: Has one primary flight: late July-August in the Mountains and late August-September in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. but with at least one specimen collected in May in the Coastal Plain. Overlaps but is usually earlier than A. parthenice.

HABITAT: According to Schmidt (2009), "Grammia (Apantesis) virgo is essentially a species of mesic deciduous and mixed forests, associated with natural forest openings such as wetlands and meadows, and disturbed habitats such as pastures and roadsides." In addition to hardwood forests -- both upland and lowland -- we have numerous records from Longleaf Pine savannas, flatwoods, and sandhills, as well as peatland habitats and diabase barrens. We do not, however, have any records from the Outer Banks or other barrier islands.

FOOD: Members of this genus are highly polyphagous, feeding on a wide range of herbaceous plants, with dicots possibly preferred (Schmidt, 2009). Wagner (2005) mentions that Bedstraw (Gallium sp.) is favored in some areas, although that species is missing from a number of sites where we have recorded this moth.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes well to blacklights, with 56 having been caught in a single trap. The mouthparts are non-functional (Singer, 2000, cited in Schmidt, 2009), so it does not come 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: Occurs across most of the state and occupies a wide range of habitats; appears to be secure