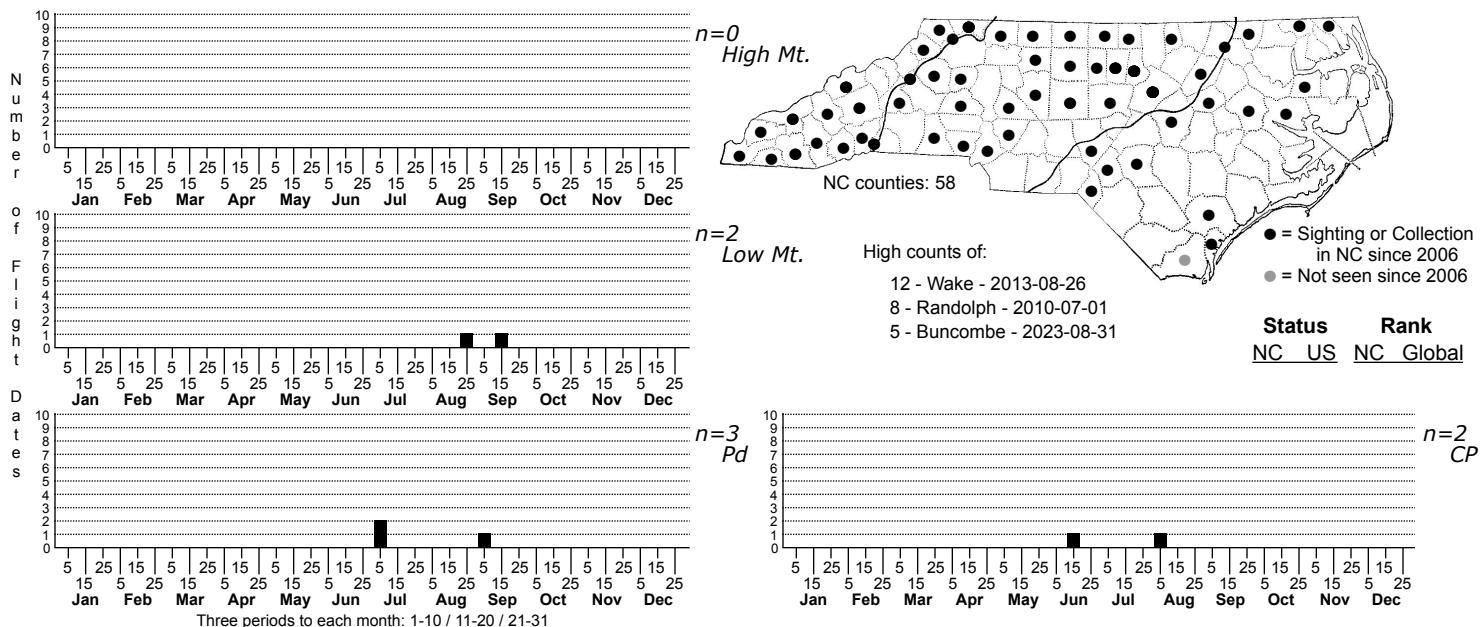


# *Halysidota harrisii* Sycamore Tussock Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of five species in this genus that occur in North America (Lafontaine and Schimdt, 20010), three of which have been recorded in North Carolina

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: (Not in either field guide)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960)

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

ID COMMENTS: Adults of all three of our species of *Halysidota* are highly similar to one another, possessing long, pointed wings that are translucent yellow and marked with bands of slightly darker, offset cells forming a tessellated pattern. The markings of *H. harrisii* and *H. tessellaris* are virtually identical and cannot be identified from photographs; only examination of male specimens can be used for reliable identification of adult *H. harrisii*.

DISTRIBUTION: Based on larval records, it appears to be widespread and relatively common in the Piedmont and low mountains. Uncommon in (or absent from) the high mountains and much of the coastal plain, except possibly along brownwater rivers where sycamore occurs.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Wagner (2005) states that *Halysidota harrisii* has two flights over most of its range. This is probably the case in North Carolina, but we do not have enough adult records to detect any clear patterns. The far more common larval records do seem to suggest distinct summer and fall generations.

HABITAT: Riparian forests, including brownwater river floodplains in the Coastal Plain and bottomland hardwoods more generally in the Piedmont and Low Mountains.

FOOD: Larvae are believed to feed solely on American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) (Forbes, 1960; Wagner, 2005), which has been confirmed as the host in North Carolina. Other reported hosts are most likely in error.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes to blacklights in small numbers even in areas that appear to be prime habitat, but whether that is due to lack of attraction to lights or small population sizes is unknown. May feed on flowers similarly to *H. tessellaris*, but none have been caught at bait. Looking for larvae blown down from Sycamores by storms appears to be the best method of searching for this species.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 SNR [S4?]

STATE PROTECTION: Has no legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands. Should possibly be placed on the NHP Watch List until more is learned about its actual distribution and abundance

COMMENTS: This species is certainly a habitat specialist but appears to be even rarer than would be expected based on the distribution of Sycamore in the state. We have inspected hundreds of adult specimens with all but a tiny fraction turning out to be *H. tessellaris*, even in areas where Sycamore is common or at sites where we have definite records of their presence. The reason for this rarity (or apparent rarity) is unknown.