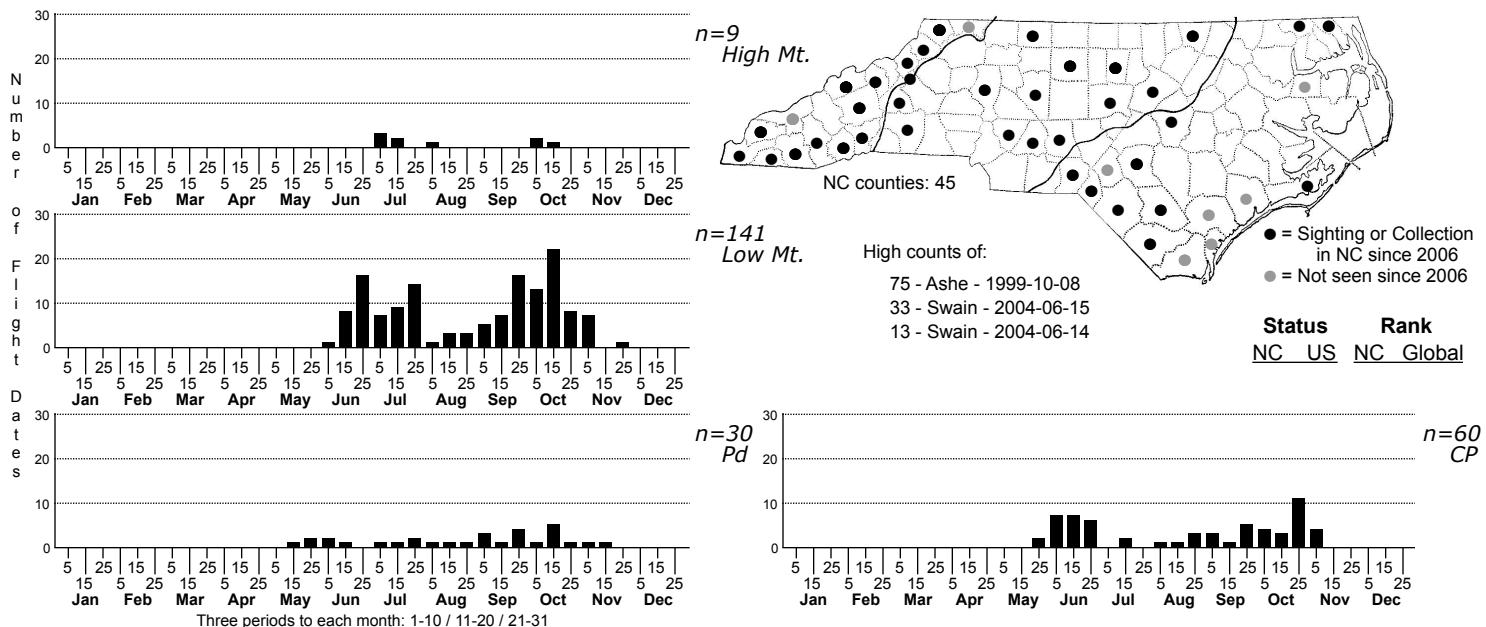


# *Orgyia definita* Definite Tussock Moth



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Lymantriinae TRIBE: Orgyini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of ten species in this genus that occur in North America, four of which have been recorded in North Carolina.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1948); Ferguson (1978)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Ferguson (1978); Wagner (2005).

ID COMMENTS: Males are predominately dark brown, contrastingly shaded with areas of lighter brown or red. As in leucostigma but not detrita, a tornal white spot is usually well-developed. Both the antemedian and postmedian are black and thicker than in the other species of *Orgyia*; the postmedian is more evenly rounded opposite the cell (typically angled in leucostigma -- Ferguson, 1978). The subterminal is shaded with dark and light brown and is often striated with dark brown dashes and with white dashes present near the apex. Females have only rudimentary wings, similar to the females of *Phigalia* species.

DISTRIBUTION: Probably occurs statewide.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Appears to have two to three peaks in activity, possibly separated into distinct flights.

HABITAT: Our records come from virtually all types of forested habitats occurring in the state, including maritime forests, peatlands, Longleaf Pine habitats, Piedmont and Mountain floodplains and ridges.

FOOD: Larvae are polyphagous, feeding on a wide range of woody plants. Ferguson (1978) lists willow (*Salix*), oak (*Quercus*), basswood (*Tilia*), elm (*Ulmus*), birch (*Betula*), maple (*Acer*), and witch-hazel (*Hamamelis*). In North Carolina, larvae have been recorded feeding on Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Sugar Maple (*A. saccharum*), Box-elder (*A. negundo*), buckeye (*Aesculus* sp.), Hazel Alder (*Alnus serrulata*), hickory (*Carya* sp.), hackberry (*Celtis* sp.), Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), American Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), oak, Coastal Plain Willow (*Salix caroliniana*), and blueberry (*Vaccinium* sp.).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Our records all come from 15 watt UV light traps. Adults do not feed, so do not come to bait or to flowers. Larvae are distinctive and should be looked for on low-growing trees and shrubs. The hair of all Lymantriinae larvae are possibly urticating, however, and should be handled with care (Ferguson, 1978).

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4S5]

STATE PROTECTION: Has no legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: With its statewide distribution and use of a wide variety of host plants and habitats, this species appears to be secure within the state.