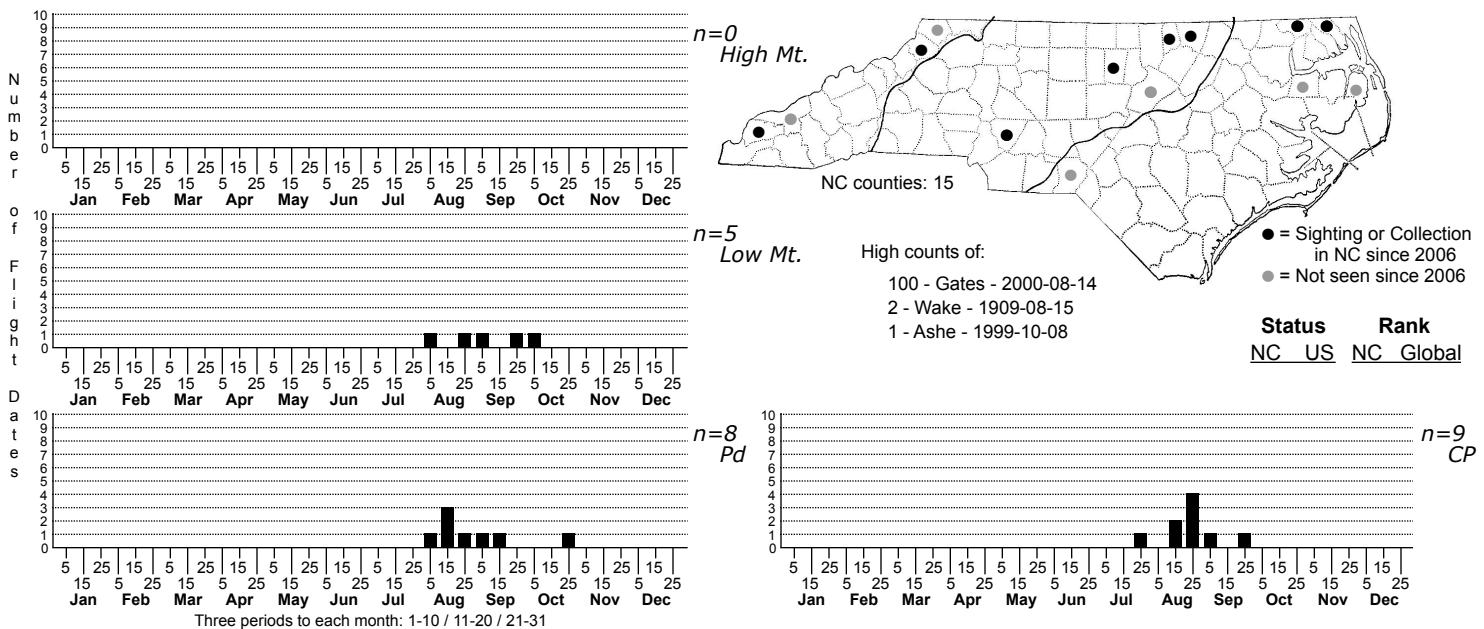


Catocala cara Darling Underwing



FAMILY: Erebidae SUBFAMILY: Erebinae TRIBE: Catocalini

TAXONOMIC COMMENTS: One of 103 species in this genus that occur in North America (Gall and Hawks, 2010; Kons and Borth, 2015a,b), 67 of which have been recorded in North Carolina.

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

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Sargent (1976)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1954); Wagner et al. (2011)

ID COMMENTS: A large underwing moth. Forewings are a dark, maroon-brown, dusted with green, gold, or yellowish-gray scales but typically less pale than in *carissima* and lacking a strongly contrasting pale patch at the apex. Hindwings are banded with black and bright red to rose; the inner margin and base of the hindwing are marked with black. *Catocala carissima* is very similar but is more strongly mottled and possesses a distinct apical patch of light scales. In worn specimens, the dentations of the postmedian -- particularly the two distal points and the point just above and outward from the sub-reniform patch -- are longer and narrower in *cara* than in *carissima* (SPH, pers. obs.). *Catocala amatrix* is also similar in size and hindwing color and frequently flies with *cara* in the same habitats. Typical *amatrix* have strong oblique dark dashes that are missing in *carissima*. Form *selecta* of *amatrix* has a more yellow-brown ground color on the forewings than *carissima*, possesses a grayish sheen rather than a gold dusting, and has an inward-pointing tooth on the antemedian near the radial vein -- in both *cara* and *carissima* a prominent outward-pointing tooth is present in this area. The base of the hindwing of *amatrix* is usually not marked with black although there may be a small spot of black at the inner margin.

DISTRIBUTION: We have records from all provinces of the state, but are currently missing from the western Piedmont and southern Coastal Plain. Over at least the eastern portion of the state, *C. cara* appears to be sympatric with *C. carissima*.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Univoltine, with our records coming from late July to early October, with most from August.

HABITAT: All records from sites where we have habitat information come from lake, pond, and river shorelines, all sites where willows are common.

FOOD: Larvae are apparently stenophagous, feeding on willows (<i>Salix</i> spp.); Black Willow (<i>S. nigra</i>) is especially used in the South (Wagner et al., 2011). Reports from <i>Populus</i> need confirmation. We do not have any feeding records in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes to blacklights to some extent but like other Underwings comes particularly well to bait (Wagner et al., 2011).

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4]

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

COMMENTS: This species does not appear to be common but adults may be undersampled by light trapping. It is otherwise widespread in North Carolina and is associated with common host plants and habitats. It currently appears to be secure within the state.