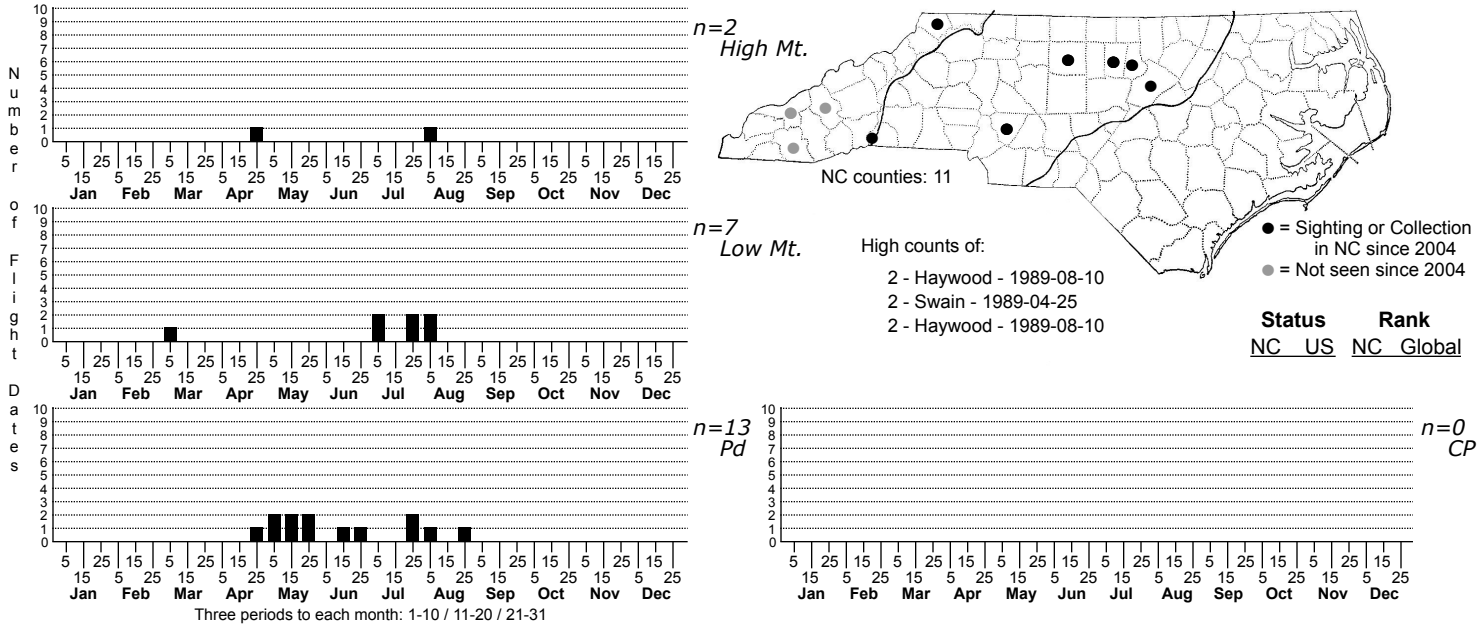
Acronicta rubricoma Ruddy Dagger



FAMILY: Noctuidae SUBFAMILY: Acronictinae TRIBE:
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of 74 species in this genus found in North America north of Mexico (Schmidt and Anweiler, 2020), 42 of which have been recorded in North Carolina. Acronicta rubricoma belongs to Forbes's Group I, which in North Carolina also includes A. americana, A. hastulifera, A. dactylina, and A. lepusculina.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS:
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Schmidt and Anweiler (2020)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES:

ID COMMENTS: A medium-large Dagger with pale gray to darker brownish-gray forewings. The antemedian and postmedian are double, with a white filling. The antemedian is strongly looped, with particularly long loops located on the lower half of the wing. The orbicular is usually ocellate -- pale with a darker gray center. The reniform is large, horseshoe-shaped and marked with a dark shade. The veins in the subterminal area characteristically have heavy dark lines, typically originating from black dots on the subterminal (Forbes, 1954). Hindwings are gray with darker veins and a dark postmedian band. Acronicta americana, A. hastulifera, and A. dactylina are similar in pattern but are larger and have a generally smoother appearance. A. impleta is similar in size and color and also has an ocellate orbicular and darkened reniform. However, it has narrower wings and either lacks or has more obscure subterminal dashes. A. impleta also has more uniformly colored hindwings, lacking the postmedian band found in A. rubricoma.

DISTRIBUTION: Please refer to the dot map.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Piedmont records come primarily from rich bottomland forests. Mountain records, however, come mainly from upland forests.

FOOD: Larvae feed on Celtis species as well as elm (Wagner et al., 2011). In North Carolina, we have recorded the species feeding on Sugarberry (Celtis laevigata) and Common Hackberry (C. occidentalis).

OBSERVATION_METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 S3S4

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

COMMENTS: