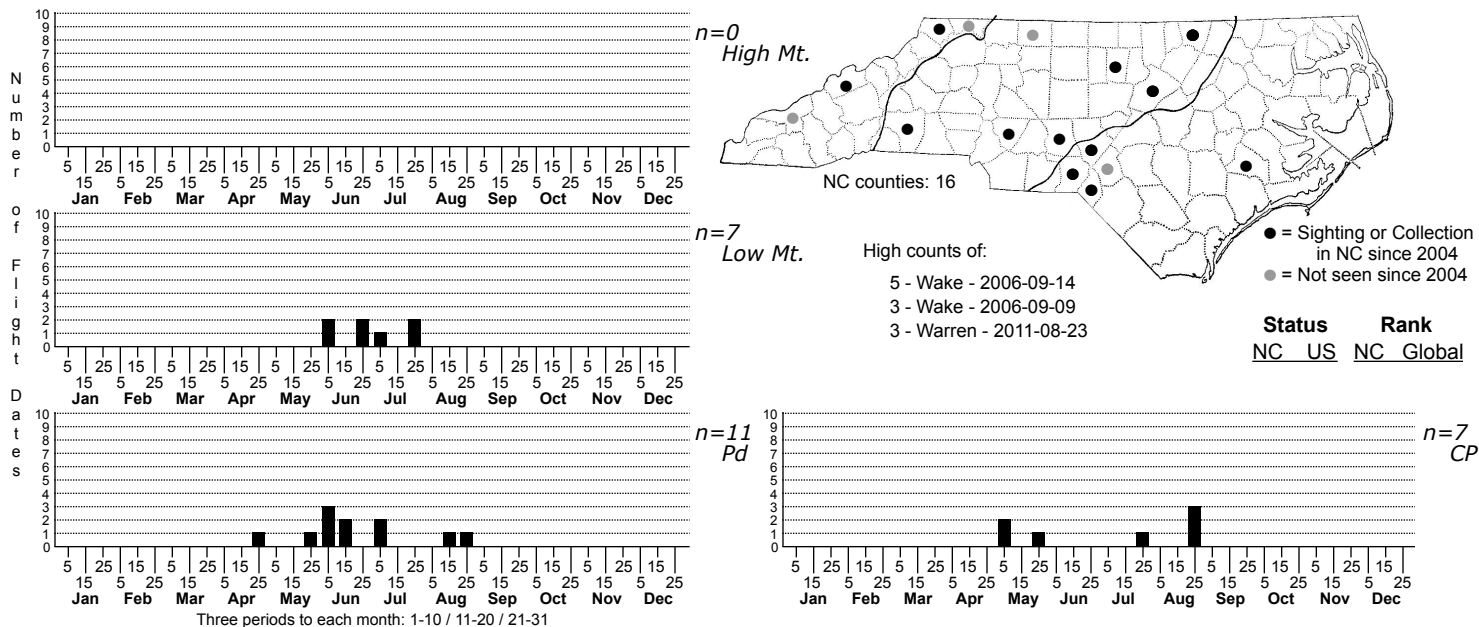


Acronicta hastulifera Frosted Dagger



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 hastulifera* was included in Species Group I by Forbes (1954), which in North Carolina also includes *A. rubricoma*, *A. americana*, *A. dactylina*, and *A. lepusculina*.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS:

ONLINE PHOTOS:

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1954); Schmidt and Anweiler (2020)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Most larval records come from alder, but with a few from birch and hazel (Wagner, et al., 2011).

ID COMMENTS: A medium-large dagger that is far more easily identified in the larval stage than in the adult. Sexes are dimorphic, the males having nearly white forewings and hindwings and the females having darker, powdery gray forewings and evenly luteous hindwings (Forbes, 1954). The postmedian of the forewings is conspicuous in both sexes: white with a sharply defined black outer edge and a diffuse or absent inner line. Dark patches are usually present on the outside of the postmedian and a dark smudge is located over the reniform spot; the orbicular is usually small, outlined in black, and circular. A basal dash is absent but a somewhat smeared anal dash is typically present. The hindwings have a median line that shows up well on the underside but more weakly above. The veins of hindwings of the male are lined with gray, but are not contrasting in the females. *Acronicta dactylina* is highly similar in size and wing pattern, but males usually have darker forewings than *A. hastulifera* and have a bluer-gray shade in both sexes than found in *A. hastulifera* (Forbes, 1954). The postmedian is also more sharply marked in *A. hastulifera* but less deeply excavated between the veins. *A. americana* is also somewhat similar but is larger and easily distinguished by differences in hindwing pattern: dark fuscous in the females and luteous but with dark-lined veins in the males. Although it may be possible to identify at least some individuals of *A. dactylina* based on photographs of the adults, association with known populations of the larvae provides more confidence.

DISTRIBUTION: Please refer to the dot map.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Our records all come from lake, pond, and stream shorelines.

FOOD: Larvae feed predominantly on alder but have also been reported on birch and hazel (Wagner et al., 2011). The species has been observed feeding on *Alnus serrulata* in North Carolina, but more research is needed into other hosts that are utilized in our state.

OBSERVATION_METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 S3S4

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

COMMENTS: