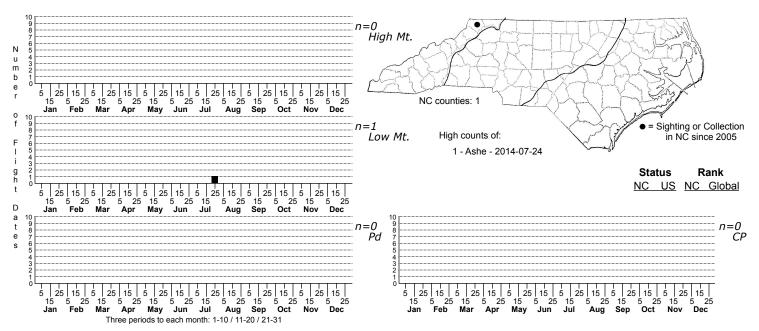
Acronicta lepusculina Cottonwood Dagger



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

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, usually with whitish or pale gray forewings. A basal dash is usually present, at least as a smudge, unlike in other members of Forbes's Group I, where it is typically absent. The antemedian is usually represented only by a dark spot on the costa and the fold; a dark spot may also be located on the costa representing the median line. The postmedian is normally complete and moderately dentate. As in <i>Acronicta hastulifera</i> and <i>A. dactylina</i> , it may be accented by dark shading on the outer side, particularly where the anal dash crosses. The orbicular is usually small, obscure, or absent; the reniform is better defined and marked with a dark shade. Hindwings are white without dark lines on the veins. <i>A. hastulifera</i> i> and <i>A. dactylina</i> are similar in size, pattern, and color but lack the basal dash and usually have less sharply defined dark spots (Forbes, 1954).

DISTRIBUTION: Please refer to the dot map.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Our one record comes from a ridge top with an extensive cove forest on a north-facing slope. Balsam Poplars have been observed along some of the creeks in the general area but not close to where the specimen was collected.

FOOD: Larvae feed primarily on cottonwoods and other <i>Populus</i> species, but have also reported on alder (<i>Alnus</i>), birch (<i>Betula</i>), and willow (<i>Salix</i>) (Wagner et al., 2011). We do not have any feeding records in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION_METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S1S2]

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

COMMENTS: We have only a single record for this northern species. Poplars are present in the New River tributaries near where this species was collected, indicating that there may be a resident population in the area