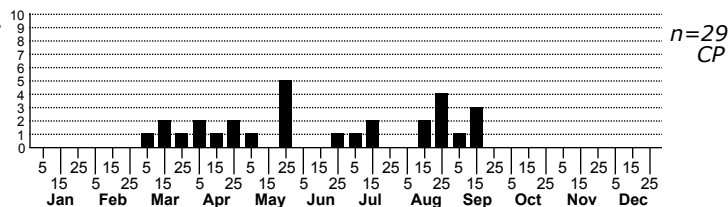
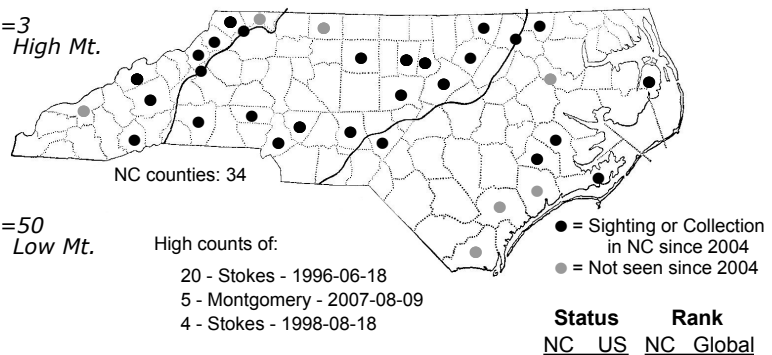
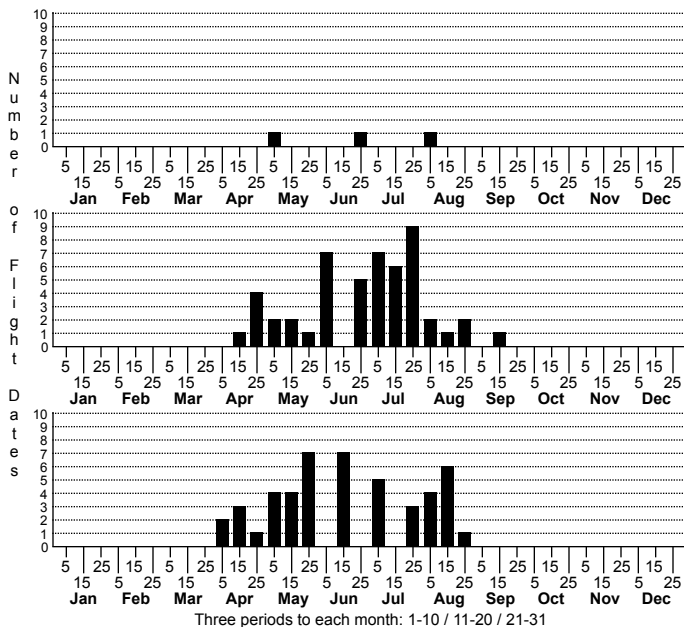


Acronicta laetifica Pleasant Dagger



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. This species is placed in subgenus *Agriopodes* by Schmidt and Anweiler, and in the Hasta Species Group. Other members of this group in North Carolina include *Acronicta hamamelis*, *A. lithospila*, *A. innotata*, *A. betulae*, *A. radcliffei*, *A. hasta*, *A. interrupta*, *A. spinigera*, *A. superans*, *A. morula*, and *A. lobeliae*. Melanic specimens generally need to be dissected.

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: This species generally has a more contrasting pattern than other members of this group, with the spots strongly outlined and with the basal, apical, and anal dashes all sharply defined and with a dash between the orbicular and reniform. The ground color is typically pale gray to whitish, distinguishing it from the darker gray *hasta*. Compared to *interrupta*, *laetifica* is usually larger and possesses more strongly outlined orbicular and reniform spots. *Lobeliae* is similar in pattern and color but is noticeably larger.

DISTRIBUTION: The species seems to be found throughout most of the state, though it is rare at high elevations in the mountains, and possibly absent from parts of the coastal plain.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Our records come mainly from bottomlands, where hornbeam is nearly universally present, and from mafic areas, where hop-hornbeam is common.

FOOD: Larvae feed on hornbeam, hop-hornbeam, and possibly hazelnut (Wagner et al., 2011). In North Carolina, the species has been recorded feeding on American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*).

OBSERVATION_METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 S4

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

COMMENTS: