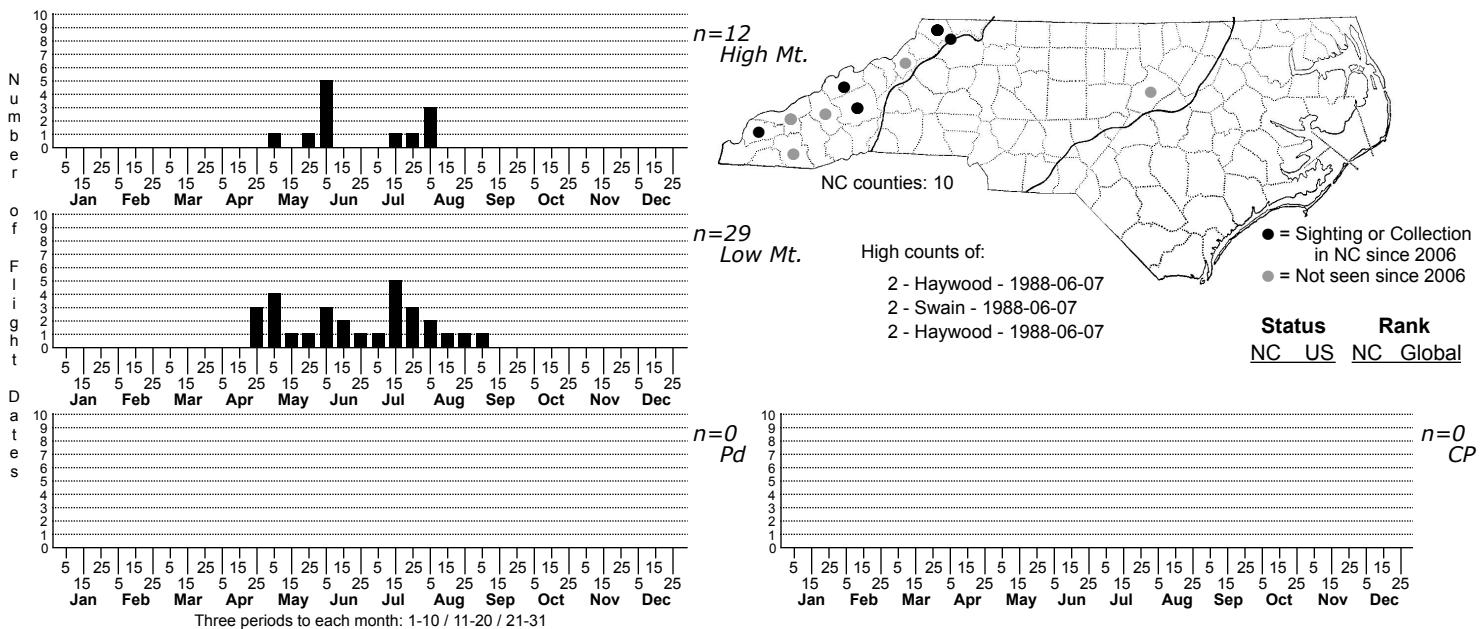


Acronicta spinigera Nondescript Dagger



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. laetifica*, *A. superans*, *A. morula*, and *A. lobeliae*.

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: The ground color is powdery light gray with only a small amount of brown in the subterminal area (Forbes, 1954). A fine black basal dash is present that extends out to the antemedian where it has forks connecting to both the inner and outer portion of that line. The apical and anal dashes are also very fine and sharp. The antemedian is double with the inner and outer lines about equally strong. The postmedian is strongly dentate and also double, although the inner line is more indistinct except towards the inner margin. The subterminal is formed by a series of diffuse whitish spots, with the one at the anal angle the strongest. The orbicular is large, fairly round, and filled with the pale gray ground color. The reniform is usually darkly shaded, with a dark median line extending across it from the costa. The hindwings are evenly fuscous-gray and only slightly darker than the forewings. This species is similar to several other members of the hasta group, but lacks the dash between the orbicular and reniform that is usually present in *A. hasta*, *A. laetifica*, and *A. lobeliae*. Compared to *A. interrupta*, the forewing is more mottled, rather than the smooth gray of *A. interrupta*; its reniform is also larger and its wings are generally broader (Schmidt and Anweiler, 2020). *Acronicta clarescens* is also similar, particularly in specimens that lack the distinctive yellow thoracic tuft. The dashes in that species, however, are usually more diffusely smudged rather than narrow and sharply defined as they are in *A. spinigera*.

DISTRIBUTION: Though Brimley recorded the species in Raleigh in 1938, all of our records have been restricted to the mountains.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Our records come mainly from cove forests and high elevation forests in the mountains

FOOD: Larvae have apparently not been observed in the wild (Schmidt and Anweiler, 2020), but captive-reared larvae appear to prefer basswood (*Tilia*), with elm (*Ulmus*) and apple (*Malus*) also accepted (Wagner et al., 2011). Covell (1984) also lists cherry (*Prunus*) and blackberry (*Rubus*) as hosts, but which (if any) of these species are used in North Carolina is unknown.

OBSERVATION METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 SNR [S3S4]

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

COMMENTS:
March 2026

The Moths of North Carolina - Early Draft