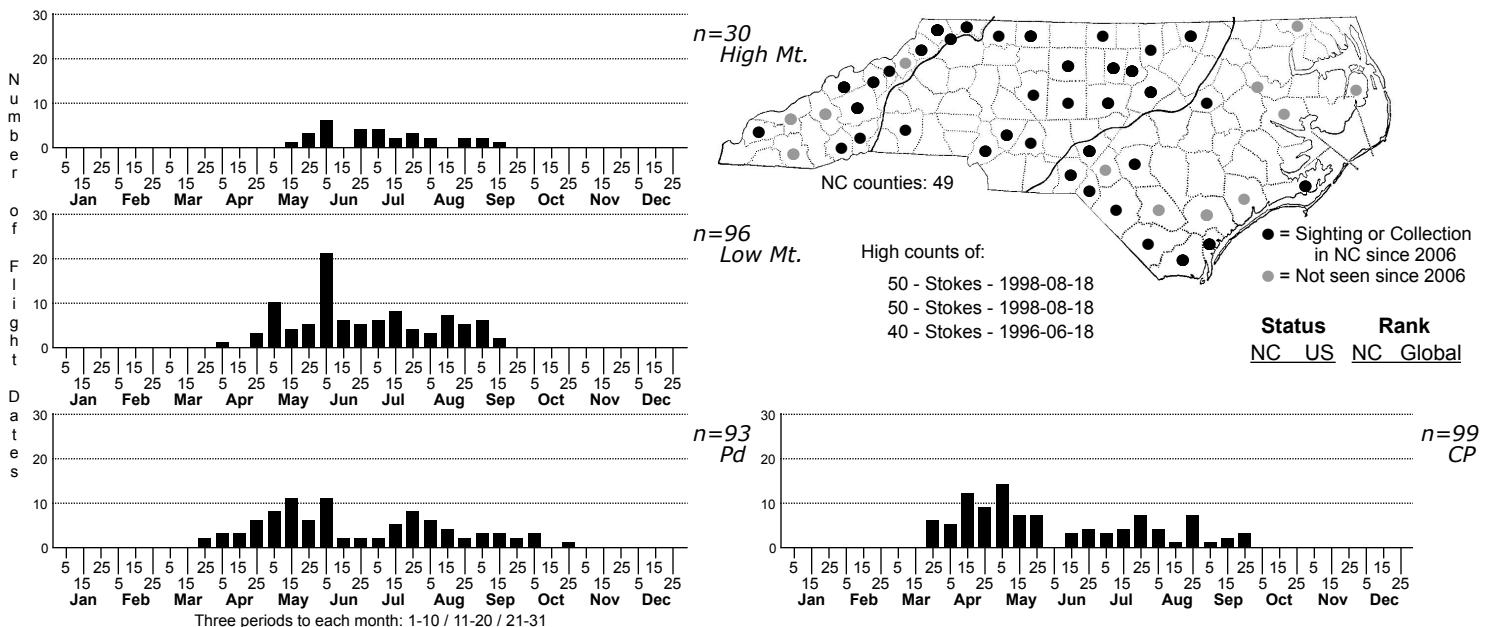


Acronicta afflita Afflicted Dagger



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. Placed in subgenus *Lepitoreuma* by Schmidt and Anweiler (2020), which contains nine species in North Carolina, and further joined by *Acronicta brumosa* to form the *Afflita* Species Group.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)

ONLINE PHOTOS:

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

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1954); Wagner (2005); Wagner et al. (2011); Anweiler and Schmidt (2020)

ID COMMENTS: The ground color of the forewings is generally blackish with a brownish cast; small, diffuse patches of white are also present. A black, bar-shaped basal dash is present but the most conspicuous marking is the orbicular spot, which is round, filled with white, but with a diffuse grayish central spot. The hindwings are off-white, with fuscous shading on the veins and more generally towards the outer margin (Forbes, 1954; Schmidt and Anweiler, 2020). *Acronicta brumosa* is similar in pattern but the forewings are not shaded with brown and appear more bluish-gray. The basal dash is also longer in *A. brumosa* and the orbicular is more oval-shaped and is filled with pale gray rather than white. *Acronicta hamamelis* is another dark, brownish-gray species but has darkly-shaded hindwings and has a more elliptical orbicular that is shaded with dark gray.

DISTRIBUTION: Occurs statewide, from the high mountains to the barrier islands.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Adults are seen from spring to late summer, with possibly two peaks in abundance.

HABITAT: Schmidt and Anweiler (2020) state that this species is most common in xeric oak woodlands and some of our largest single samples come from dry, ridgeline oak forests. However, we also have records from bottomland and cove forests, as well as cool, mesic stands of high elevation red oak forests.

FOOD: Larvae feed on oaks, including species in both the Red and White Oak groups (Wagner, et al., 2011). In North Carolina, Tracy Feldman has recorded a larva on Turkey Oak (*Quercus laevis*).

OBSERVATION METHODS: Comes well to blacklights but records from bait are absent.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S4S5]

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

COMMENTS: This species is relatively common and occupies a wide range of habitats and occurs throughout the state. Consequently, it appears to be secure in North Carolina.