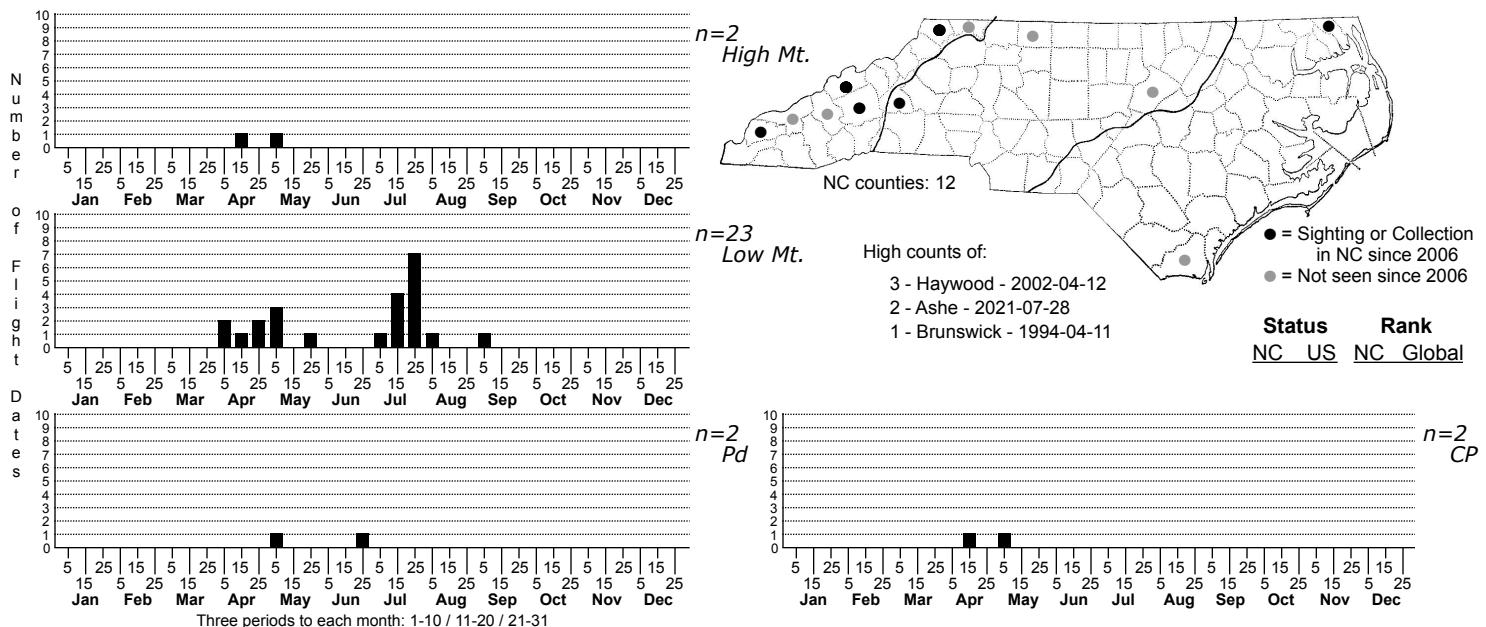


# *Acronicta noctivaga* Night-wandering Dagger



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 noctivaga* is a member of Species Group V of Forbes (1954), which in North Carolina also includes *A. impleta*, *A. impressa*, *A. longa*, *A. oblinita*, *A. lanceolaria*, and *A. sinescripta*.

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:

DISTRIBUTION: Found primarily at lower elevations in the mountains, it also occurs in at least a few locations along the coast, but is apparently absent from most of the state.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Please refer to the flight charts.

HABITAT: Wagner et al. (2011) list barrens, floodplains, woodlands, and forest edges as habitats used by this species. In the Mountains, our records come mainly from alluvial and cove forests, but also from high elevation summits. In the Piedmont, records come lake shores and in the Coastal Plain from swamps.

FOOD: Smith and Dyar (1898, p. 258) state that host plants are "Poplar; also various low plants." Tim McCabe (cited in Wagner et al., 2011) found a larva on meadowsweet (*Spiraea*) and reared this species both on that plant as well as cherry (*Prunus*). While meadowsweet may be used in the mountains, it does not occur in the Piedmont and coastal plain, where cottonwoods (*Populus*) seem more likely. Robinson et al. (2010) also list Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), dogbane (*Apocynum*), and blueberry (*Vaccinium*), but these hosts require confirmation and more research is needed into the host plants that are utilized in North Carolina.

OBSERVATION METHODS:

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 SNR [S2S3]

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

COMMENTS: This species is infrequent in the mountains and there are also puzzling records as far east as Bald Head Island. More information is needed concerning its host plants and habitat associations.