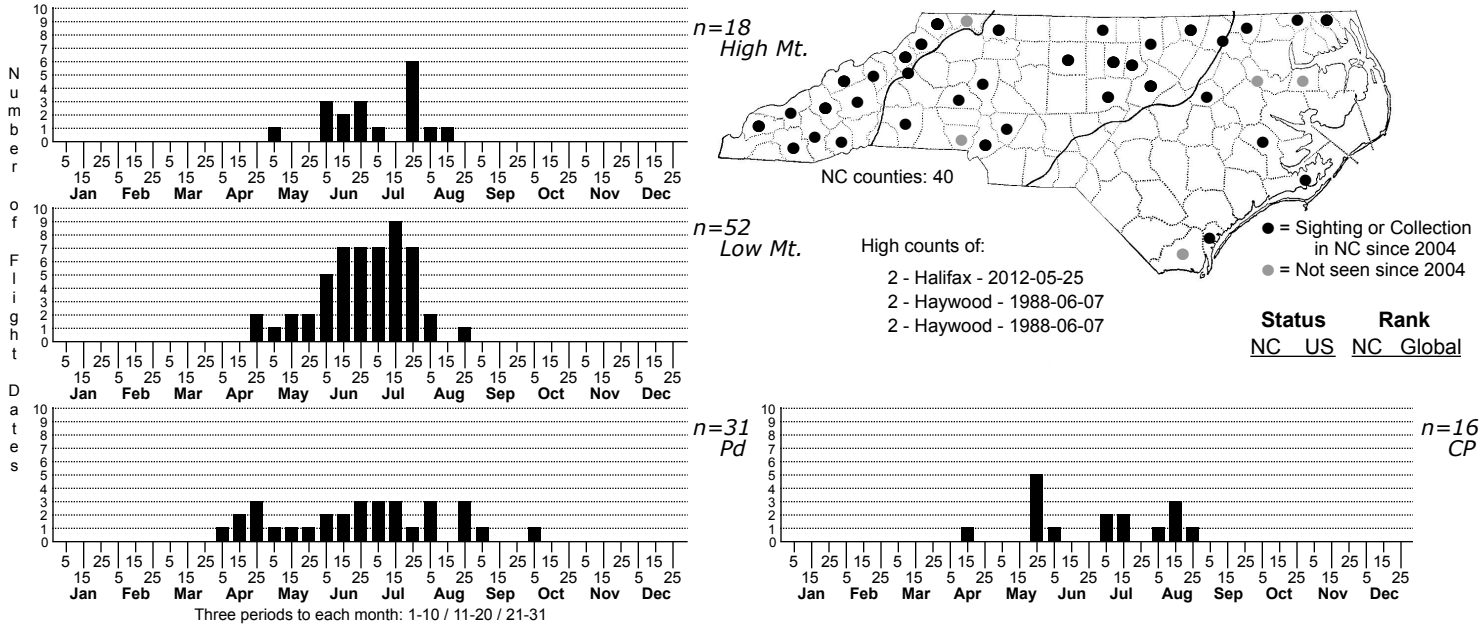
Ceratomia undulosa Waved Sphinx



FAMILY: Sphingidae SUBFAMILY: Sphinginae TRIBE: Sphingini
TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: Six species of this genus occur in the US with a few more in the Neotropics. The genus appears to be an assemblage of several unrecognized genera and our three species eventually will probably all be placed in separate genera.

FIELD GUIDE DESCRIPTIONS: Covell (1984); Beadle and Leckie (2012)
ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1948); Hodges (1971); Tuttle (2007)
TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1948); Wagner (2005); Tuttle (2007)

ID COMMENTS: A large, grayish brown sphinx moth with double lines, several dark dashes, and a small white discal dot. This species is most likely to be confused with C. catalpae which is a smaller, duller brown species with a reduced reniform spot. It is also similar in at least size and shape to Manduca jasminearum, which is generally browner, has a prominent oblique dark dash, and lacks a discal dot. Sexes are similar.

DISTRIBUTION: Our most common Ceratomia (unless you live in a grove of Catalpa trees) and found everywhere in North Carolina.

FLIGHT COMMENT: Apparently there are two broods but individuals flying in May and representing the first brood are uncommon. Later in the season this species together with Darapsa myron and Paonias excaecata make up the bulk of sphingid catches in light traps.

HABITAT: Our records come almost entirely from hardwood forests growing on rich soils, including brownwater river floodplains in the Coastal Plain, riparian and basic-mesic forests in the Piedmont and Mountains (including rich cove forests). Additionally, there are several records from the Great Dismal Swamp State Park, possibly associated with blackwater swamp species of Ash (i. e., Carolina or Pumpkin Ash).

FOOD: Stenophagous. Mainly on Ash but Wagner (2005) also lists Fringe Tree and Lilac (also in the Oleaceae).

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Originally recorded as feeding on flowers but the tongue is small and with no recent nectaring records, feeding is questionable. Adults come readily to lights but not to baits.

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G5 S2S4

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

COMMENTS: This is another species that may be negatively impacted by the spread of the emerald ash borer. However, it is currently widespread and abundant and its potential use of host plants other than Ash may allow it to be spared. It's status should be monitored as the Emerald Ash Borer continues to spread in the state.