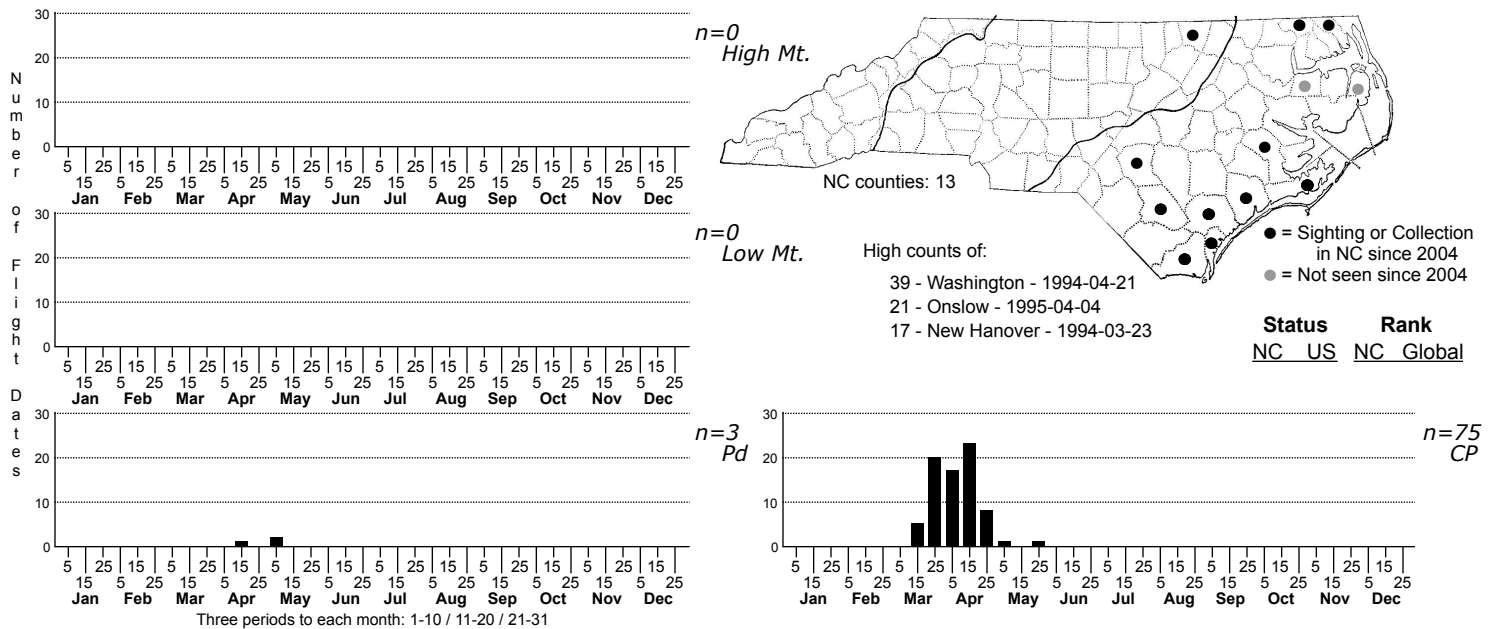


Spilosoma dubia Dubious Tiger Moth



FAMILY: Erebiidae SUBFAMILY: Arctiinae TRIBE: Arctiini

TAXONOMIC_COMMENTS: One of eight species in this genus that occur north of Mexico and one of four species found in North Carolina

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

ONLINE PHOTOS: MPG, Bugguide, BAMONA

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, ADULTS: Forbes (1960)

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION, IMMATURE STAGES: Forbes (1960); Wagner (2005)

ID COMMENTS: This is the most heavily spotted of our species of *Spilosoma*, with black spotting on both the fore- and hindwings. It can be distinguished from *S. congrua*, which can have similar spotting on the forewings (but only rare spotting on the hindwings), by a pattern of orange patches and black spots on the dorsal side of the abdomen, which is pure white in *congrua*. The pattern of yellow and black on the abdomen is shared with *S. virginica* and *Estigmene acrea*, but is more obscured in *dubia* by an overlay of longer white hair. *Dubia* is much more heavily spotted than *virginica*, which usually has only a couple of small dots on the forewings (as well as on the hindwings). *Estigmene* is much larger and has proportionately longer wings than the *Spilosomas* and has smoother, shorter hair on the thorax, which is usually fluffy-looking in *Spilosoma*.

DISTRIBUTION: Appears to be restricted to the Coastal Plain, including the Outer Coastal Plain and barrier islands as well as the Fall-line Sandhills

FLIGHT COMMENT: Has a single spring flight in North Carolina

HABITAT: The majority of our records come from Longleaf Pine habitats, primarily savannas and flatwoods but with a significant number from dry-to-xeric sandhills. It also makes at least some use of pure peatlands and maritime forests.

FOOD: Probably polyphagous, feeding on many species of herbaceous and woody plants (Wagner, 2005); Forbes (1960) stated that one did well on Plantain (*Plantago* sp.). The habitat restrictions -- in North Carolina at least -- suggest there may be some association with heaths or hollies, which are among the few plants that are found in Longleaf Pine communities, peatlands, and maritime forests.

OBSERVATION_METHODS: Comes well to blacklights, with up to 39 having been collected in a single trap; not recorded at bait

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM RANKS: G4 [S3S4]

STATE PROTECTION: Currently placed on the NHP Watch List as W3: seemingly rare species that are too poorly known to assess their conservation status in North Carolina. Has no legal protection, although permits are required to collect it on state parks and other public lands.

COMMENTS: This species appears to be somewhat specialized in terms of its habitat use, with most of its habitats having undergone severe reduction due to habitat conversion and fire suppression. Probably vulnerable to the effects of habitat fragmentation but still found over a large area of the Coastal Plain, at least in large tracts of natural habitat.