



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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Barrens Dagger Moth

Acronicta albarufa

State Status: **Threatened**

Federal Status: None

Description: The Barrens Dagger is a noctuid moth with blue-gray forewings mottled with black and white, a black basal dash curving towards the costa, a rusty-brown reniform spot, and a small, round orbicular spot, often white with a dark center. The hind wings are white in males and grayish-brown in females. Wingspan is 30-37 mm.

Habitat: Xeric, oak-dominated woodland, barrens, and scrub habitats on sandy soil. In Massachusetts, the Barrens Dagger inhabits open-canopy pitch pine-scrub oak barrens, especially scrub oak thickets; also open oak woodland on Martha's Vineyard.

Life History: Adult moths fly from late June through early August. Larvae feed from summer into early fall, and pupae overwinter. Scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*) is the primary host plant, though other oak species may also be used.

Range: This species is widespread in North America, but populations occur in restricted, disjunct areas. In the East, major populations occur in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas and the pine barrens of southern New Jersey and southeastern Massachusetts.



Photo by M.W. Nelson

Adult Flight Period in Massachusetts

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Threats

- Habitat loss
- Fire suppression
- Invasion by exotic plants
- Introduced generalist parasitoids
- Insecticide spraying
- Off-road vehicles
- Light pollution

