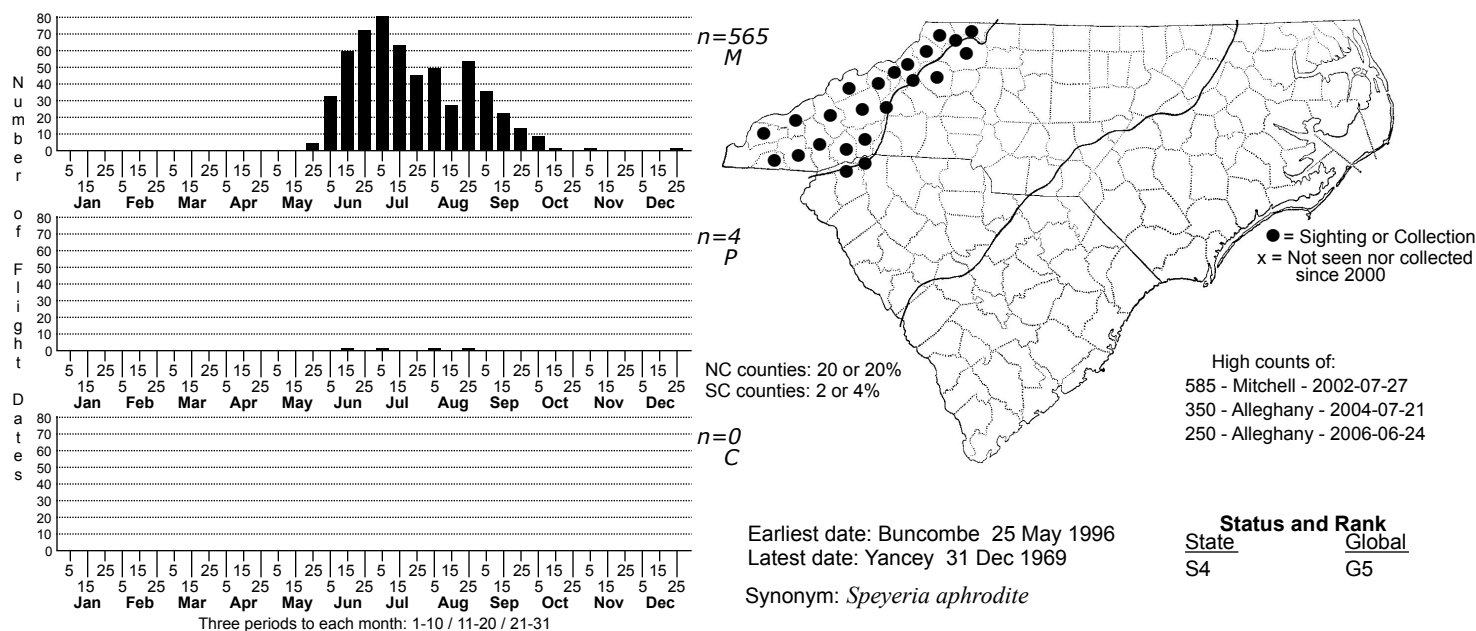


Aphrodite Fritillary *Argynnis aphrodite*



DISTRIBUTION: Throughout the Mountains, but mainly at the higher elevations (above 3500 feet); essentially absent from the Piedmont. Records attributed to the latter province are from the Blue Ridge Escarpment along the boundary of the Mountains and Piedmont.

ABUNDANCE: Generally common to locally very common in the northern Mountains. Farther south (Madison and Buncombe counties southward), limited more to elevations above 3500 feet, where it may be fairly common but certainly is uncommon at the lower elevations. Rare to uncommon in the extreme southwestern counties, where essentially found only at the higher elevations there. It is less numerous overall in the Mountains than the Great Spangled Fritillary, but the Aphrodite can outnumber the Great Spangled in some places (mainly in the northern Mountains).

FLIGHT PERIOD: A single brood, slightly narrower in time than that of the Great Spangled; late May or early June to very early October, straggling to early November. As with other fritillaries, males precede females by about a week, and there is some aestivation of individuals in mid- to late summer, before flying again later in August.

HABITAT: Overlaps with that of the Great Spangled, such as meadows, moist thickets, and forest edges. However, it shows more affinity for openings along roads or small clearings in the higher Mountains than does the Great Spangled. Nevertheless, the Great Spangled often outnumbers the Aphrodite along wooded roadsides, especially at lower elevations. The Aphrodite outnumbers Great Spangled in some meadows in the extreme northern Mountains and at the highest elevations such as Roan Mountain, where it can at times be the most common butterfly recorded on the Fourth of July count.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: As with other fritillaries, violets (*Viola* spp.) are believed to be the sole foodplants. Nectar plants include milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.), Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*), and many other flowers.

COMMENTS: Identification of large fritillaries can be difficult. The Aphrodite tends to be slightly smaller, and slightly deeper orange on average than the Great Spangled; however, the narrow yellowish under hind wing post-median band is the best mark. The Aphrodite also has a more purplish ground color to the under hind wing; the Great Spangled is more rufous or rusty in color, with a wider yellowish or creamy band in front of the large white submarginal spots. Aphrodites usually have a blacker outer margin on the upper side of the Fore wing than do Great Spangled, which can often be orange. The two species are often seen together and cannot be separated by habitat alone.