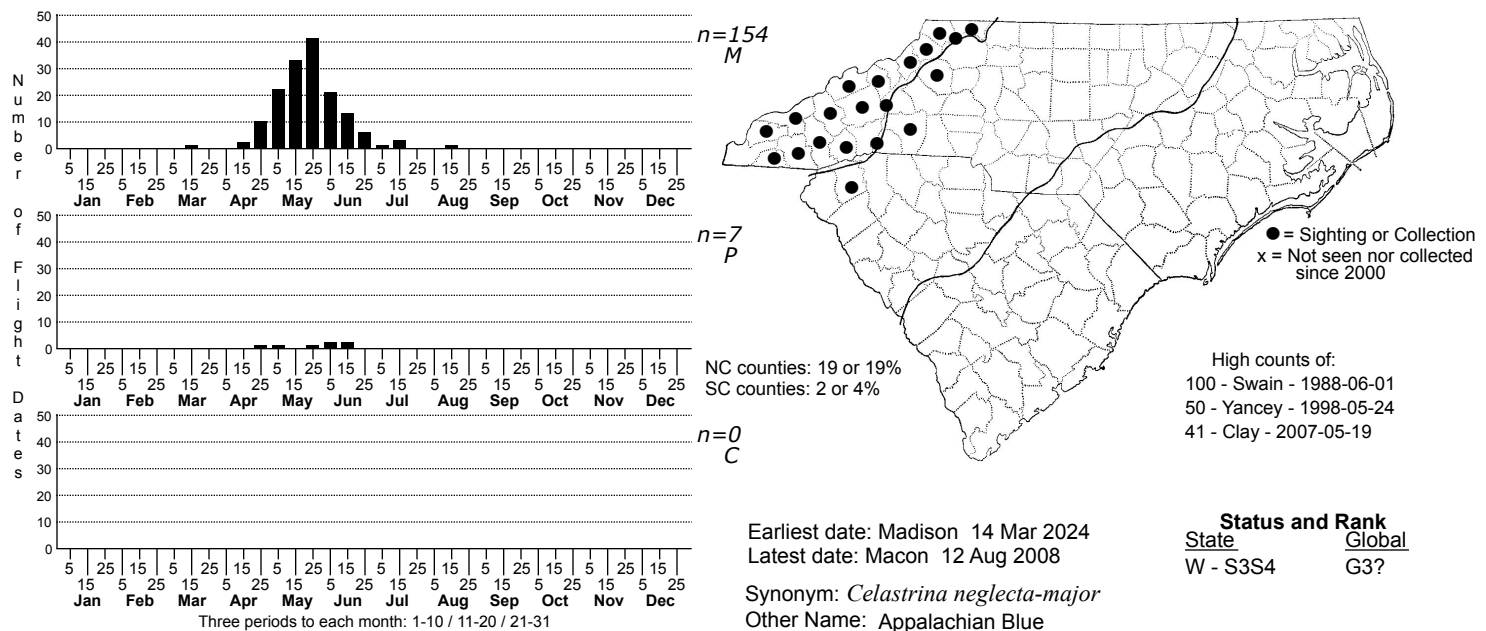


## Appalachian Azure *Celastrina neglectamajor*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Occurs throughout the Mountains, from the VA line south to the GA and SC state lines. Also occurs in the South Mountains in the western Piedmont.

**ABUNDANCE:** Locally common in a few areas, but generally uncommon over most of the Mountains. In fact, in VA it is known from nearly all of the Mountain counties (Pavulaan 2021), and in WV it is known from about 90% of the Appalachian Mountain counties (Allen 1997). It is scarce as compared with the Spring Azure and the Summer Azure; however, Harry Pavulaan (pers. comm.) observed well over 100 freshly-emerged males at a mud puddle in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. There are several additional counts of over 40 individuals in a day.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** A single brood; late April into mid-July, depending on elevation. The flight period occurs in the "valley" between the brood of the Spring Azure and the first major brood of the Summer Azure. That is, when the males of Appalachian Azures begin to appear from late April to mid-May, generally only females of Spring Azures and first-brood Summer Azures are present. Female Appalachian Azures fly mainly from late May to early July; in fact, Harry Pavulaan states that Appalachian Azures fly well into July in the higher elevations in the Smokies. Males are probably finished flying by mid-June, at least in the lower elevations. Male Summer Azures generally emerge as male Appalachians become worn and thus primarily fly during the flight of female Appalachians. Thus, the statement that Appalachian Azure flies in the gap between the first and second broods of the Spring Azure complex is an over-simplification, as this gap is not a long one, and much overlapping with the single brood of Appalachian Azure occurs.

**HABITAT:** The species is limited to rich hardwood forests, such as coves (including openings), dirt roads through cove forests, and edges of these forests. It is most frequently seen along streams in these habitats (H. Pavulaan, pers. comm.); however, my best results have been at mud and damp spots along dirt roads through rich woods and streamside forests.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The only known foodplant is Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*), a common plant of rich slopes and coves. Nectar plants are not well known. The species is more often seen on dirt roads or on mud along creeks gathering minerals and moisture than seen at flowers.

**COMMENTS:** This species can be overlooked, or passed over, as a Spring Azure or a Summer Azure; it can be a very difficult species to identify for certain. As Glassberg (1993) indicates, it is extremely important to know the local flight periods of the Spring Azure complex at a site where a suspected Appalachian Azure is found; it is also important to note the condition and sex ratio of any azures observed at the site. For example, fresh male Spring or Summer azures likely will not be found at the same place and time as fresh male Appalachians. Appalachians are quite strikingly large, about the size of a Gray Hairstreak or a Banded Hairstreak; otherwise, field marks separating them from other azures are probably unreliable. Below, they look practically identical to Summer Azures but are paler than Spring Azures, which are medium to sooty gray. Thus, photographs of a single azure, without any other butterflies (or a coin) in the frame, cannot safely be called an Appalachian Azure, unless the photographer describes the size relation to other nearby azures or similar-sized butterflies. Lepidopterists suggest that the best way to locate a colony of Appalachian Azures is to look for caterpillars on Black Cohosh flowers during early summer, then looking for adults there the following May or June.