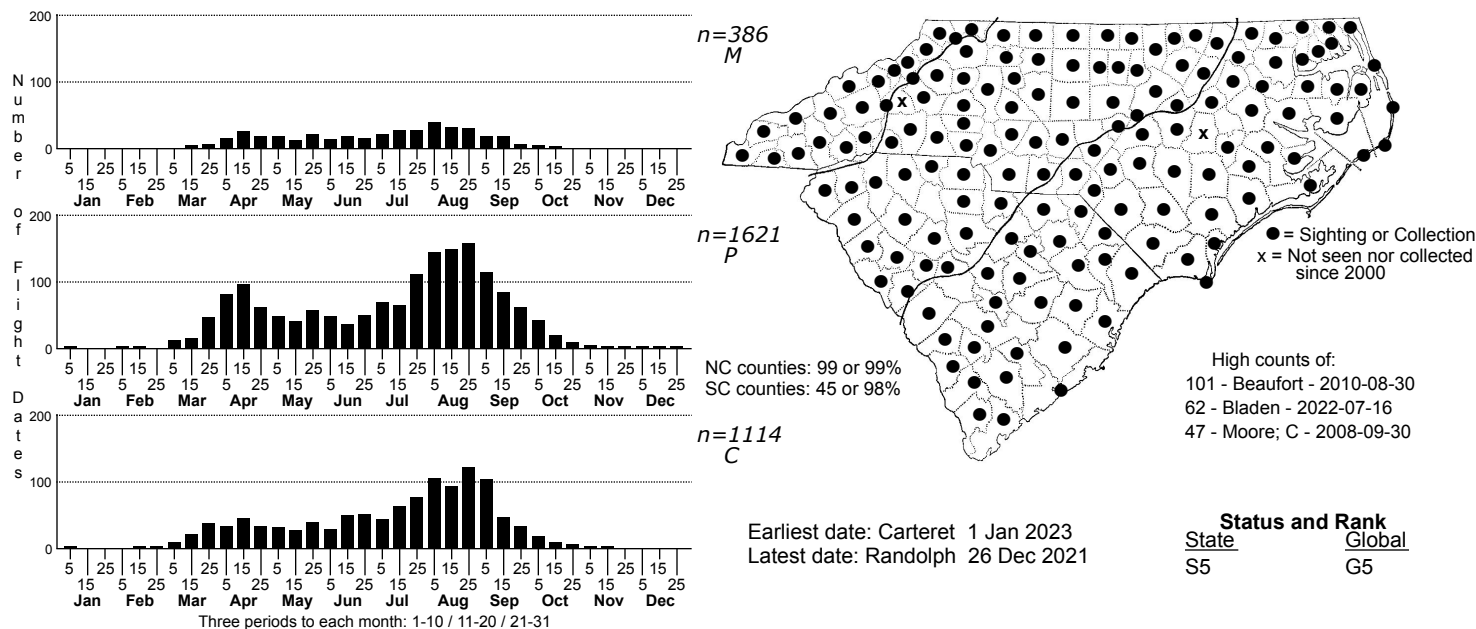


## Black Swallowtail *Papilio polyxenes*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Statewide; found in all provinces, and undoubtedly occurs in all counties.

**ABUNDANCE:** Overall, uncommon to fairly common. Somewhat more numerous near the coast than elsewhere, and it may be common locally in some tidewater sites. Despite it being considered a common butterfly in the Eastern United States, it is not a common butterfly in NC. Interestingly, caterpillars are often seen on garden plants (in the umbel family), but adults seldom seem to be numerous.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Early or mid-March to mid-October; rarely to early November, with a few records until the end of December. There are apparently three broods, but the species has a continuous flight period, with no gaps in the flight season. In the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, abundance peaks in July and August.

**HABITAT:** This species likes open country and is seldom seen in forests or even along forest edges. It prefers old fields, meadows, marshes, savannas, gardens, and other open places.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Foodplants are species in the umbel family, such as Queen-Anne's-Lace (*Daucus carota*); both native and introduced species are used. Adults nectar on many species, such as milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.).

**COMMENTS:** This can be a difficult species to identify. First, it has a very rapid and erratic flight, making it difficult to identify on the wing. Second, it can be confused with Spicebush, Pipevine, Palamedes, and female Eastern Tiger swallowtails unless seen well when perched. This identification problem may account for its relative uncommonness -- many blackish swallowtails seen flying by the observer must be left unidentified, and it is suspected that a fair percentage of these are Blacks. Even so, it is not nearly as numerous as the Eastern Tiger, Spicebush, and Palamedes swallowtails in NC.

This is one of the few species as familiar to butterfly gardeners as to field biologists. In some areas, Black Swallowtails are most easily found in yards and gardens, thanks to plantings of non-native foodplants such as Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) and Garden Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*).