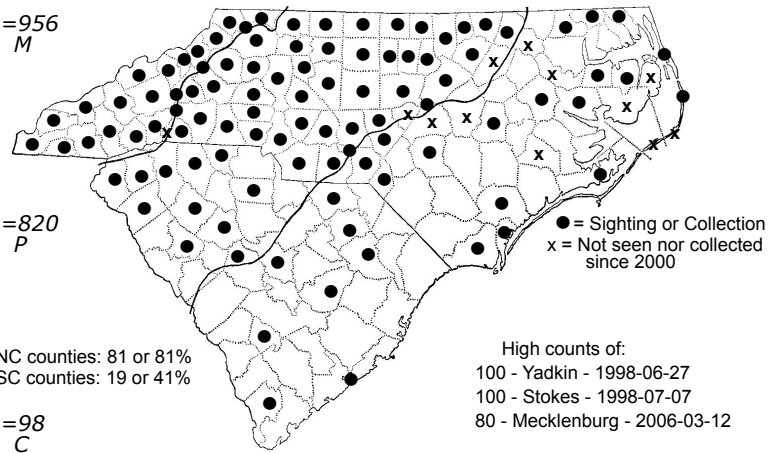
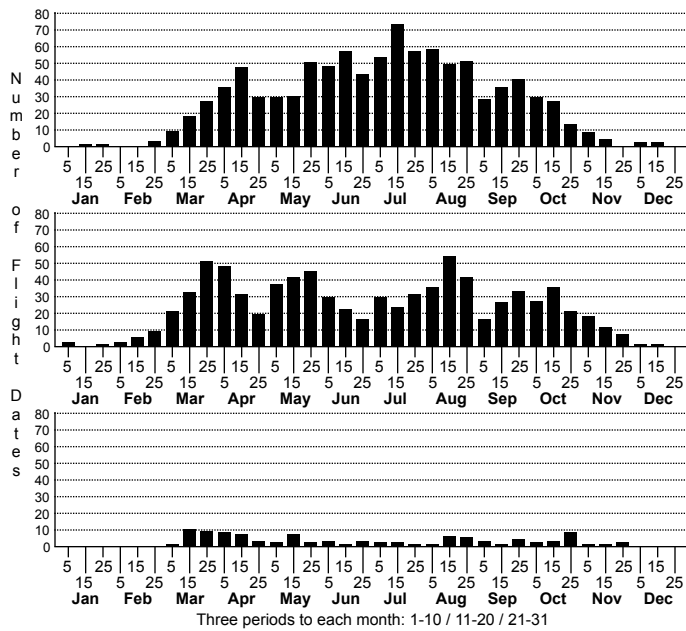


Clouded Sulphur *Colias philodice*



Earliest date: Mecklenburg 4 Jan 2005
Latest date: Buncombe 19 Dec 2023

Status and Rank
State: S4
Global: G5

Other Name: Common Sulphur

DISTRIBUTION: Primarily the Mountains and Piedmont; range in the Coastal Plain needs further elucidation, owing to difficulty in identification (with Orange Sulphur). Probably absent in most counties in the southern half of the Coastal Plain (at least now), and of uncertain occurrence even in the northern half of the Coastal Plain. Many of the records showing on the map and in the database, for the Coastal Plain, thus might not be valid.

ABUNDANCE: Declining. Common in parts of the Mountains, at least in the northern Mountains. In the Piedmont, fairly common to locally common in the northwestern counties, but rare to locally uncommon in the southern and eastern Piedmont. Generally rare at best in the northern half of the Coastal Plain. Difficulty in separating the species from the more common Orange Sulphur makes the abundance somewhat speculative. Populations have sharply declined (of both species) in recent years, and the range map and flight charts now give a false sense of abundance.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Occurs from late February into November, very rarely into December and January. Apparently four broods occur in the state, based on the flight charts. However, the Coastal Plain flight chart, odd-looking with more records in spring and later in fall than in the summer months, may be due to misidentification of Orange Sulphurs, which are much more numerous there (and Clouded are almost absent in much of the province) and which can show very little to nearly no orange on the fore wings.

HABITAT: This species is characteristic of open fields and meadows, being numerous in parts of the state in cultivated fields where legumes, such as Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), are growing. It is never seen in wooded habitats, nor does it often occur in gardens and residential areas.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are in the legume (Fabaceae) family; Alfalfa and clovers (*Trifolium* spp.) are commonly used in the East. Nectar plants are typically those in cultivated fields or in meadows, such as clovers and alfalfa.

COMMENTS: Details of the distribution and abundance in NC are not completely known, as it can be quite difficult to separate this species and the Orange Sulphur in flight. Even when perched, identification can be tricky, and the usually definitive upper surface is seldom exposed; the butterflies almost always perch with wings closed. Of course, the two species hybridize, and albinos or pale individuals of both species are frequently seen, making identification even more difficult. This species is "over-reported" in the state, particularly in the Coastal Plain, where nearly all *Colias* are likely to be Orange Sulphurs.

This species is in decline in NC, as are the Orange Sulphur and Cabbage White. Drought in recent years has hit field species very hard, and farmlands are being developed, or abandoned and re-vegetating into old fields. Except for parts of the Mountains, this species can now be tough to find, and any Coastal Plain report must be treated with caution, if not skepticism.