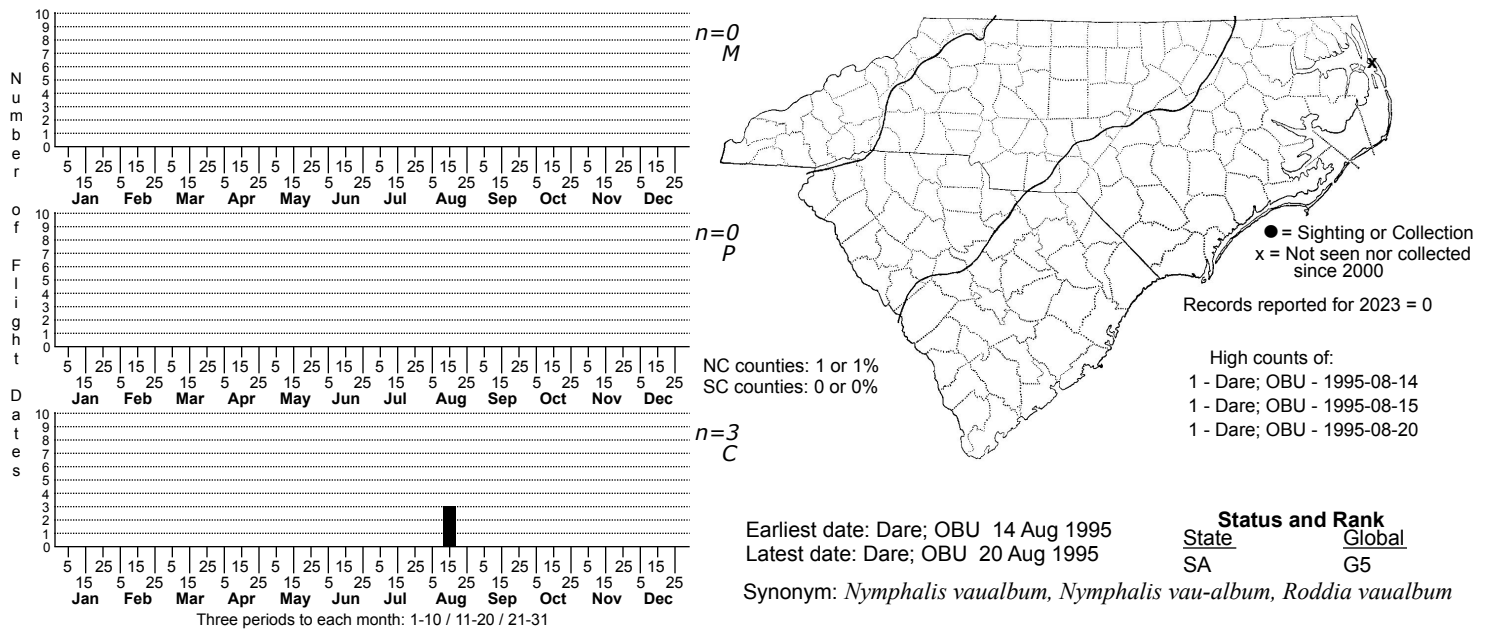


Compton Tortoiseshell *Nymphalis l-album*



DISTRIBUTION: Reported only from Southern Shores, along the northern coast of Dare County. This is a Northern species, ranging south to PA, and casually as a stray/migrant to VA and NC.

ABUNDANCE: Accidental or "escape"; one record.

FLIGHT PERIOD: The single record was of an individual (presumably just one) seen and photographed on August 14, 15, and 20, 1995 by Thomas Stock. Normally, the species emerges in late June or early July and flies until the fall; it overwinters and flies again in spring. Thus, it has a single brood.

HABITAT: The habitat of the individual seen was at a beach and yard along the coast. It fed on rotting figs in the yard. Normally, this Northern species is found in upland hardwood forests, with its habitats and behavior similar to that of the Mourning Cloak.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are various hardwood trees. The species typically does not nectar, but adults take nutrients from rotten fruit, tree sap, dung, and other non-flower sources.

COMMENTS: This species acts very much like a Mourning Cloak, with some of the markings of Commas or the Question Mark. It can alight on people; my "lifer" in NY lit on my shoulder, six inches from my eye! It is easily identified from the upper side, but the under side looks somewhat like an Eastern Comma or Question Mark.

[NOTE -- Bo Sullivan believes that because the individual was fresh, either it or a stage of its life cycle may well have been inadvertently carried to the Outer Banks. It is not unusual for caterpillars to "hitch a ride" on a vacation camper and be carried to a new location.

However, the Compton Tortoiseshell is known to stray southward. There are some isolated, out-of-range records for the species across the continent; whether these represent true strays is not known. Also, there was a coastal migration of this species in the NY/NJ area in the fall of 1995, according to Rick Cech (The Anglewing, Dec. 1996). Cape May, NJ, had its first record of Compton Tortoiseshell on August 20, 1995 (Gochfeld and Burger 1997). Thus, the NC record could have been a part of this noticeable flight. In fact, it hardly seems a coincidence that the NC record took place at the same time as Cape May's first record.]