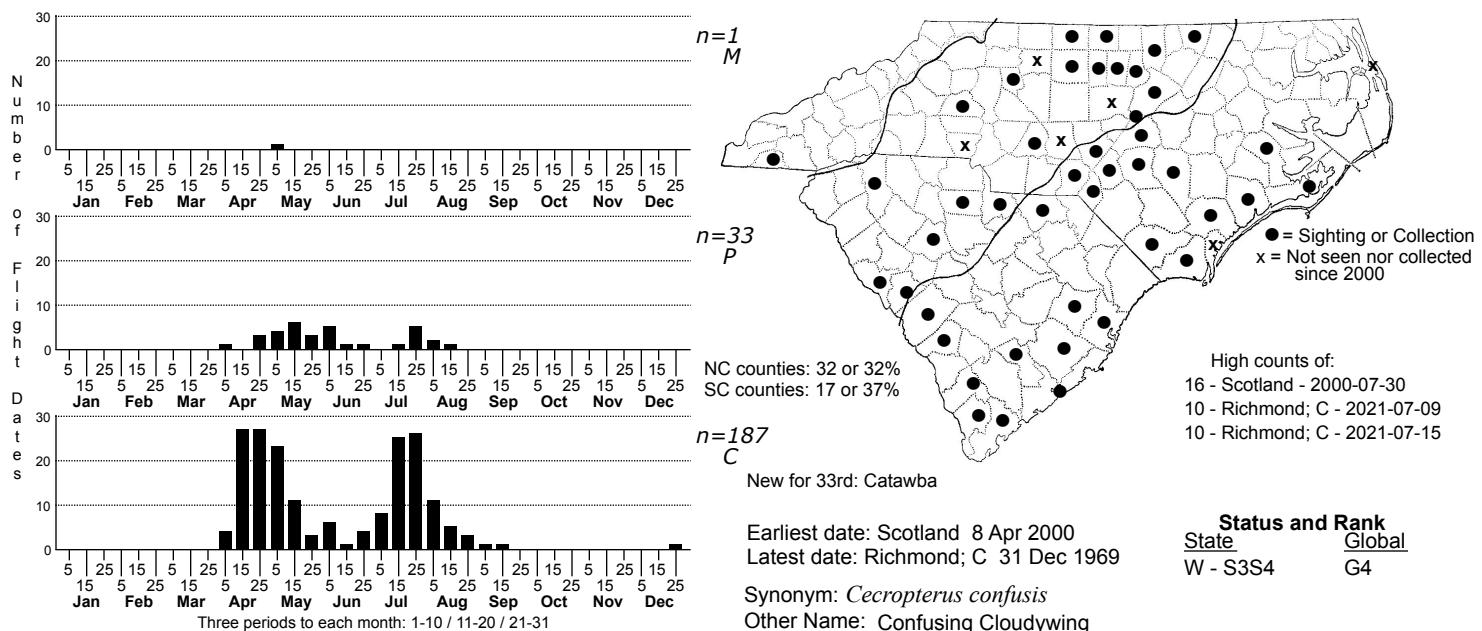


## Confused Cloudywing *Thorybes confusis*



**DISTRIBUTION:** This is a somewhat poorly-known species in NC, at least outside of the Sandhills region, because of the difficulty of identification. Records are scattered over most of the southern half of the Coastal Plain, plus the eastern portion of the Piedmont. Its status in the western half of the state needs study, but it may be nearly absent in the Mountains, and possibly also in the extreme upper Piedmont; its range in the northern Coastal Plain is also highly uncertain, but it may be legitimately absent there.

**ABUNDANCE:** Uncommon in the Sandhills; rare to locally uncommon elsewhere in the southern half of the Coastal Plain, and seemingly very rare to absent north of Craven County. Apparently rare in the eastern and southern Piedmont. A specimen collected in Clay County in 2002 by Ron Gatrell confirms the species in the Mountains. Obviously, more work is needed to determine the true abundance, but it is definitely scarce in NC and much rarer than the other two cloudywings.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods; flight periods in the Coastal Plain occur from early or mid-April to mid-June, and early July to mid-September. The flights in the Piedmont appear to be from late April to mid- or late June, and mid- or late July into August; much more data are needed.

**HABITAT:** This species favors even drier habitats than the other two cloudywings, though its habitats overlap with them. It is seen mostly in sandy, open sites near pinewoods, especially in xeric Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) habitats. However, it often is found with the other two cloudywings, particularly the Southern, in powerline clearings and along dirt roads. The habitat described in Opler and Malikul (1992) -- "Woods in river valleys or near swamps and marshes" -- is baffling and certainly not correct, at least in North Carolina.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplants are legumes (Fabaceae), generally small herbaceous species, including vines. Second brood individuals often nectar on Coastal Sweet-pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) and pink/purple composites such as thistles (*Cirsium* spp.). As with other cloudywings, most first-brood Confuseds are seen on dirt roads or at mud, basking or gathering nutrients from the wet soil.

**COMMENTS:** This is one of the most difficult butterflies to identify in NC. In fact, the Butterflies and Moths of North America [BAMONA] website has recently changed the common name to Confusing Cloudywing, as the butterfly isn't "confused", but it is "confusing" (to identify)! Carefully study the descriptions and photos in Glassberg (1999, 2012) and LeGrand et al. (2024). Confused can usually be told from Northern by the pale "face"; the Northern is dark faced, seldom shows a pale eye ring, and tends to be darker on the under wing outer margins. The Southern, like the Confused, has a pale face, a white ring around the eye, and much white frosting to the under wing margin (Confused more so). If the upper fore wing bars are hourglass-shaped, or even squared-off, it is generally a Southern. Confused generally has narrow, linear bars not squared-off at the ends. Ron Gatrell (pers. comm.), after considerable study of specimens, notes that Confused can be separated from Southern by looking at the bottom white spot in the distal carpal bar; the spot is displaced outward and is not aligned with the others above it in Confused but is larger and aligned with the others in Southern. The first brood of Southern Cloudywing has slightly thinner white fore wing bars than does the second brood, making them look somewhat like a Confused Cloudywing! Don't expect to identify every cloudywing you see in the field; in fact, it is impossible to do so. This confusion has to do mostly with individual variation in the amount of white shown by all three cloudywing species. If you see ten cloudywings in one day, you will probably see no two that look alike!