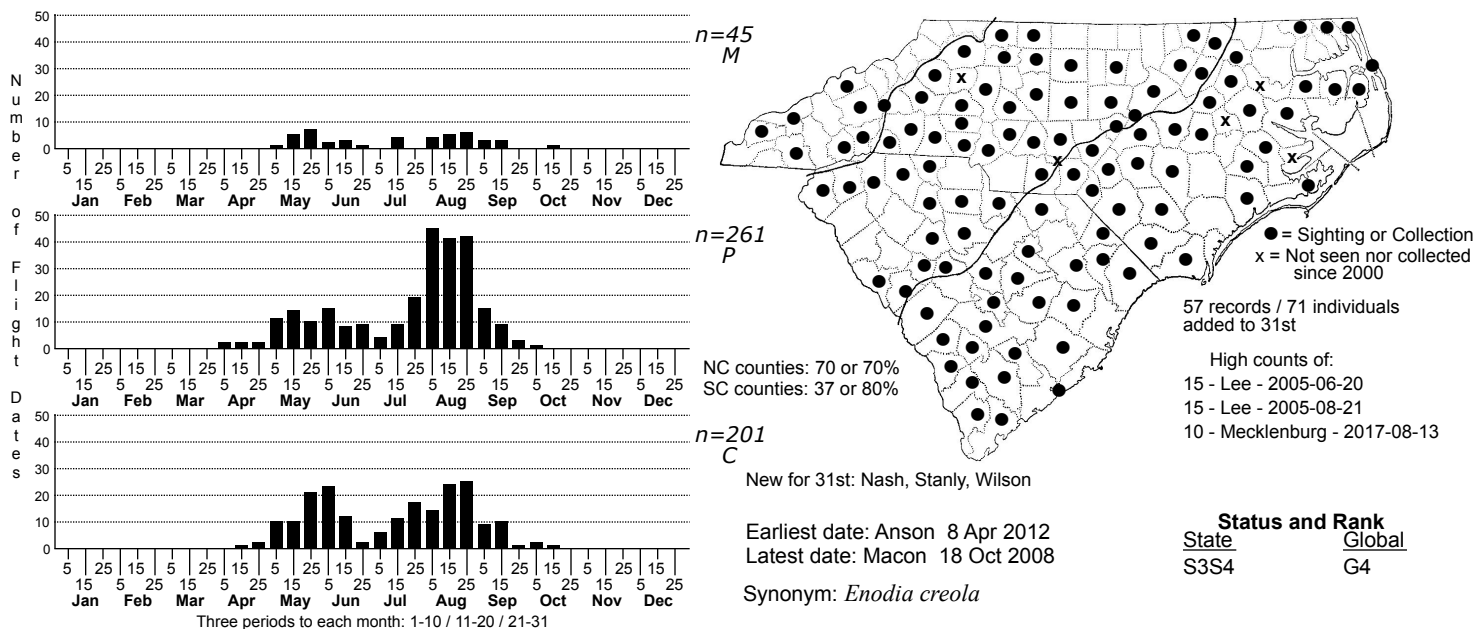


## Creole Pearly-eye *Lethe creola*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout most or all of the Coastal Plain. In the Piedmont, known from across the province, though it might be absent in some counties that border VA, as southern VA lies at the northern edge of the range. Also reported in the lower elevations in the Mountains, but seemingly absent in the northern half of the province.

**ABUNDANCE:** Uncommon in the Sandhills and northern two-thirds of the Coastal Plain, but is surprisingly rare in the southeastern portion of that province. It is rare to locally uncommon in the Piedmont. Rare to very rare in the southern Mountains, where recent photos have documented records from Buncombe, Swain, and Macon counties. Probably absent in the northern Mountains.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods; downstate from early May (rarely in April) to late June, and early July to mid-September (sparingly into October). In the Mountains, the relatively few data suggest flights from mid-May to mid-July, and August into October.

**HABITAT:** Essentially identical to that of the Southern Pearly-eye, as the species are often seen together. Habitats include bottomlands and other moist forests, maritime forests, bay forests, etc. As with the Southern Pearly-eye, it can be seen along trails and on dirt roads through forests. It also is routinely seen in shady forests; it may often fly late in the day, near or at dusk.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Essentially identical to those of the Southern Pearly-eye. A requisite cane-feeder (for the caterpillars), mainly using Switch Cane (*Arundinaria tecta*).

**COMMENTS:** The habits, habitats, and behavior of the species are, in my experience, identical to that of the Southern Pearly-eye (as are those of the Tawny Emperor with those of the Hackberry Emperor). I have at times found the Creole Pearly-eye at a site without seeing a Southern Pearly-eye, but the converse is much more often the case. The Creole is outnumbered by the Southern/Northern Pearly-eye probably 3:1 in the Piedmont, in my experience, and perhaps 10:1 by the Southern in some coastal sites. Despite the Great Dismal Swamp being a well-known locality for the Creole, I failed to see it during my work there on the NC side of the swamp in 1994. I also failed to find it during considerable field work at Holly Shelter Game Land in Pender County in 1995. And, despite a great amount of field work in the Green Swamp and other wetlands with cane in Brunswick County, no one seemed to have found Creole Pearly-eyes there or in nearby NC counties to the northeast, until I saw a single individual near the Waccamaw River in Columbus County in 2003. John Ennis photographed one in Brunswick County in 2006, and Onslow County was finally added to the list of known counties in 2016.

Creoles can generally be separated from Southern and Northern Pearly-eyes by 5 fore wing eye-spots instead of 4, and by the outward bend in the post-median line on the under fore wing, which resembles knuckles on a closed fist. Male Creoles have a long fore wing with a concave outer margin, giving them a "tall" look when perched. Antennal club color is black, usually with an orange tip; antennal club color alone cannot be used to identify Creoles (as Northerns also have black clubs with orange tips).