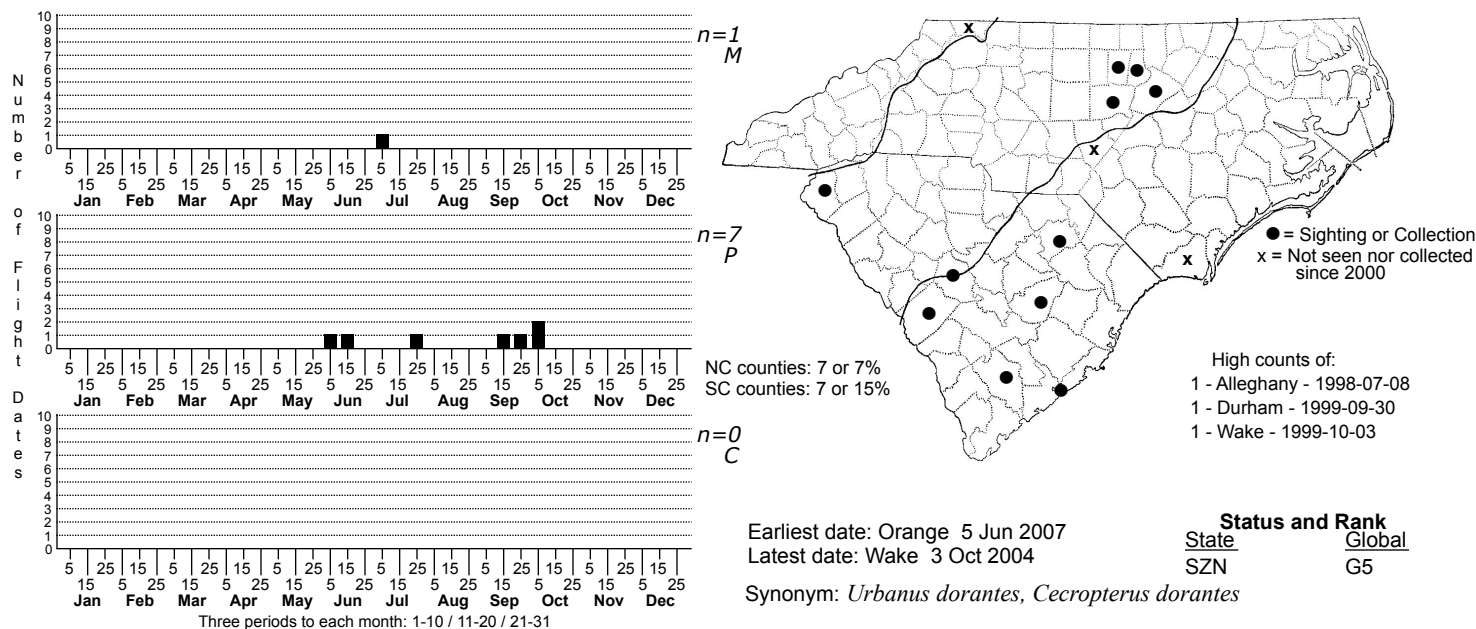


Dorantes Longtail *Thorybes dorantes*



DISTRIBUTION: A stray to NC, scattered records across the state. This is a Southern species, found primarily north to northern FL and TX. It is very slowly expanding its range northward, having been found now in seven SC counties, and it breeds sparingly along the GA coast. It has somewhat recently (2000?) been found in VA, as well (Harry Pavulaan, pers. comm.).

ABUNDANCE: A recent "arrival" to the state, with five records in 1998-1999, one in 2004, one in 2007, one in 2014, and two in 2016. The 2014 record was remarkably early; Jeff Pippen photographed one on June 5 in Orange County. This individual had certainly been blown to or carried to NC by a tropical storm that had passed up the coast from FL a few days earlier. In fact, the two records in 2016 each came a few days after the passages of a hurricane and a tropical storm! Thus, it is a casual to very rare stray to the state at the present time. Sadly, there has been no report in NC since 2016.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Dates of eight records fall between early June and early October; the other two are not known. Remarkably, two of the records are from October 3, and both were seen by me at the N.C. State University arboretum, five years apart! The species flies all year in southern FL, but records for GA and northern FL are mainly in late summer and fall.

HABITAT: The species is typically found along woodland borders, old fields, gardens, and other brushy places, in similar habitats to the closely-related Long-tailed Skipper.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are vine species of legumes (Fabaceae). Dorantes Longtails nectar on a wide variety of flowers, especially on Hairy Beggarticks (*Bidens alba*).

COMMENTS: Records for Dorantes Longtail in NC are not overly surprising, considering its range expansion in FL. It became established in FL from the West Indies, probably through a natural invasion, within the past several decades. It can be easily overlooked as a Long-tailed Skipper, but the Dorantes has a brown body and wings, as opposed to blue-green coloration present on the Long-tailed's body and basal portion of the wings. However, the Dorantes tends not to spread its wings open like a Long-tailed but keeps them in a narrow "V". Thus, observers must look inside the "V", not always an easy task, to see the all-brown wings and body.

Richard Stickney saw one on July 29, 2014, at the NC Museum of Life and Science garden in Durham. He made an interesting observation: his record and the two from Wake County are from gardens/arboretums, and he speculated that life stages of this semi-tropical species were probably brought to NC on vegetation that was planted at those two sites. His point is well taken, as one would expect that most state records of truly vagrant Dorantes Longtails should be along the southeastern coastal area. On the other hand, at least three of the records came so close after the passages of hurricanes and tropical storms that it is clear that the species is carried or blown northward by such storms. The clustering of records for the "Triangle" region of the northeastern Piedmont can be attributed mainly to a higher concentration of butterfly field work than elsewhere in the state.