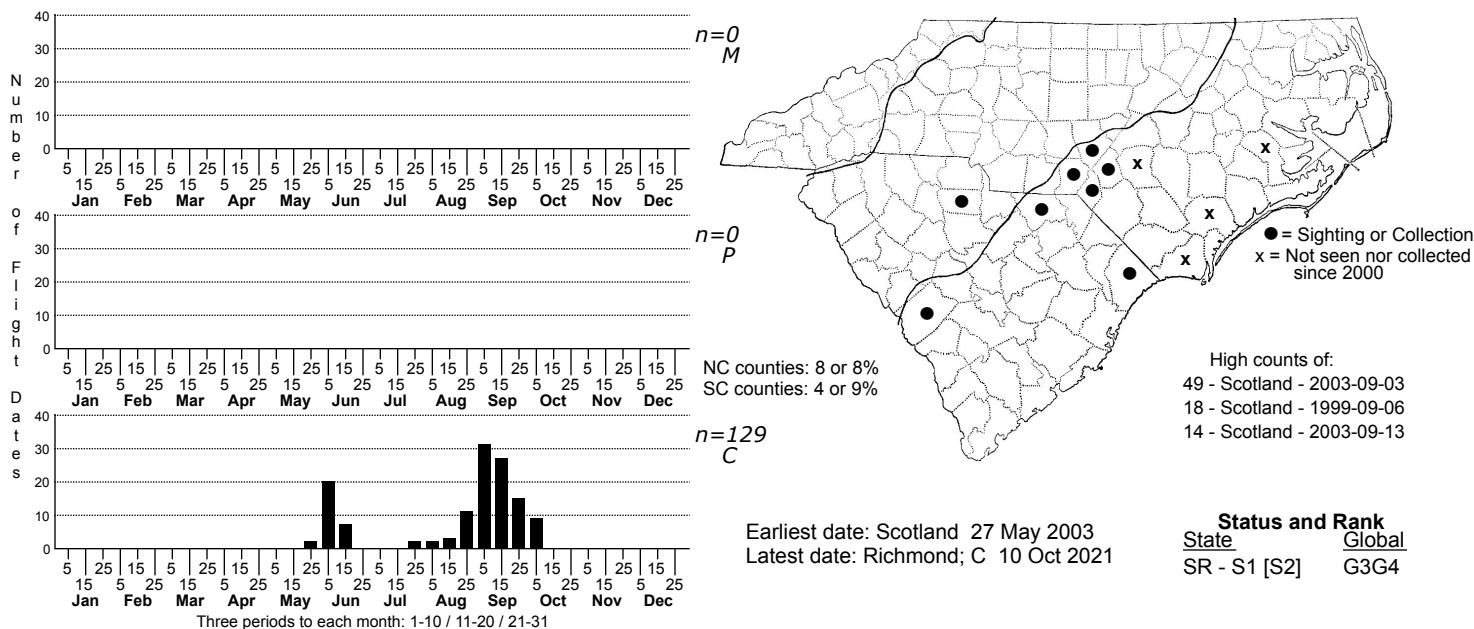


## Dotted Skipper *Hesperia attalus*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Scattered records for the southern half of the Coastal Plain, including the Sandhills. Presumably not present in the Piedmont or Mountains, and apparently absent also from the northern half of the Coastal Plain. And, the species seems to now be extirpated from the southeastern Coastal Plain; all recent records are from the Sandhills region.

**ABUNDANCE:** Possibly declining in recent years. Uncommon, to occasionally fairly common in fall, in the Sandhills; very rare and probably now absent farther eastward. The records fall in the Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) belts, of the lower Coastal Plain (Craven, Pender, and Brunswick) and of the Sandhills (Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Hoke, and Cumberland). Numbers are almost always small in the first brood; however, under certain conditions, depending on when controlled burns have taken place and the amount of lands burned, some numbers can be seen in early fall if an abundance of suitable nectar sources is present.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods; dates in NC are from late May to mid-June, and very late July to early October; peak numbers in early September.

**HABITAT:** This species favors sunny and somewhat dry Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) habitats, as opposed to the fairly shady stands of typical Longleaf Pine/scrub oak forests. Favored areas are fields of native grasses near Longleaf Pines, and open areas within Longleaf Pine stands. It seems to be very rare in savannas and wet flatwoods in the lower Coastal Plain, at least nowadays. Areas of frequent fire produce high-quality habitat for this skipper, though it does occur in fields that are kept open by mowing.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplants are not well known, but Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) has been suggested as one foodplant. The species nectars on a variety of flowers.

**COMMENTS:** This is one of the rarer skippers in the Eastern United States, with major gaps in the range and many life history features poorly known. Fortunately, I and a number of other butterflyers have found them on many occasions in the Sandhills. Thus, it is not rare in the Sandhills region. However, it could not be found in 1995 in the extensive savannas and flatwoods at Holly Shelter Game Land in Pender County. The males have an ochre ground color with less contrasting white spots below; the females are browner and the white spots are quite contrasting. Interestingly, Glassberg's books (1993, 1999) show both sexes below but fail to point out that the variation is a sexual difference. This discrepancy is corrected with excellent photographs in Cech and Tudor (2005) and LeGrand et al. (2024).

In 2021, the N.C. Natural Heritage Program moved the State Rank from S2S3 up to S1, despite the proper State Rank better at S2 or S2S3. In fact, this website has never suggested that the rank be as alarming as S1, so the justification for this move is unknown and undocumented in the Natural Heritage Program database. A rank of S2 seems to be proper.