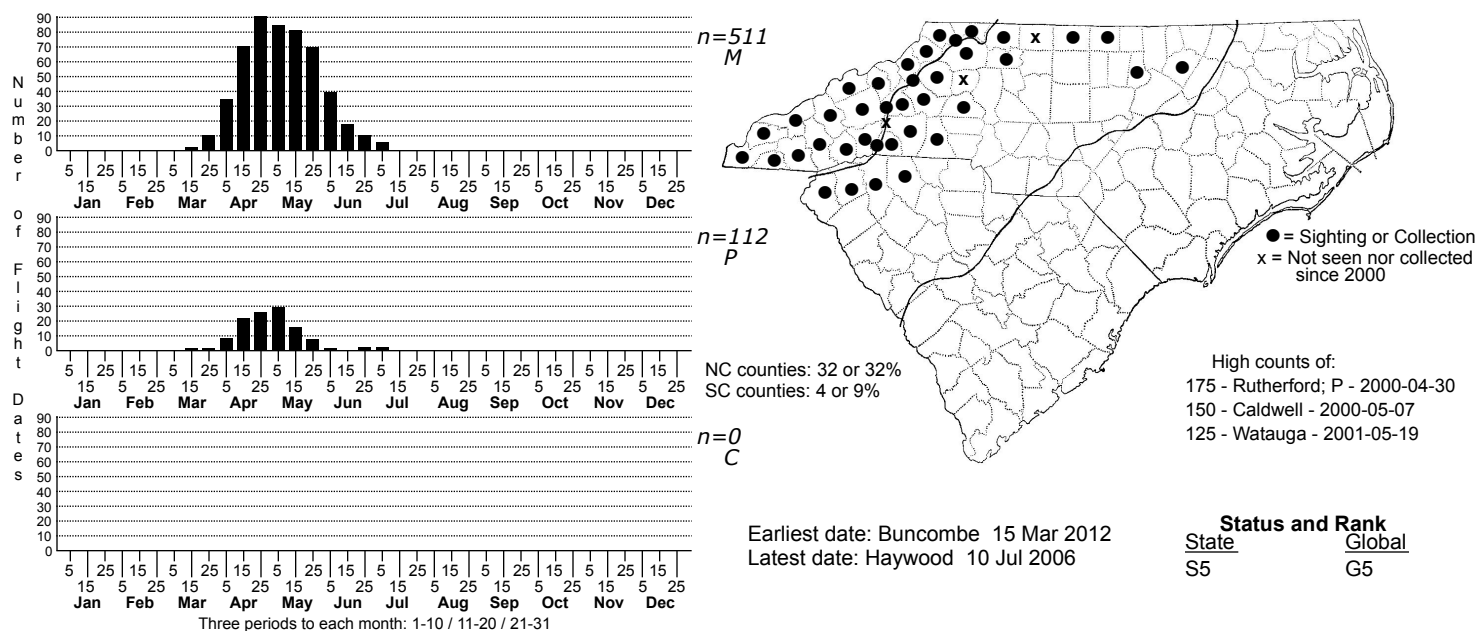


## Dreamy Duskywing *Erynnis icelus*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the Mountains, and also into the foothills (Sauratown Mountains, Brushy Mountains, South Mountains) of the Piedmont. Found at least locally in counties in the northern Piedmont, where not known prior to 2001.

**ABUNDANCE:** Common to locally abundant in the Mountains. Abundance in ranges in the western Piedmont is not well known, but common in some ranges (at least in the South Mountains). Rare and very local in the extreme northern Piedmont, and known from just single sites in Durham and Franklin counties, where it might be a recent colonist.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** A single spring brood only. The flight begins in late March and extends to late June, rarely to early July and rarely as early as mid-March. The peak numbers are in early to mid-May, or very late April in the foothills.

**HABITAT:** The species prefers openings in hardwood or mixed forests, especially along dirt roads and wood margins. It can be easily found on dirt roads and wide trails in or near forests. As it is a Northern species, it is often found at high elevations, though it can be found down at least to 1200 feet in Polk County, and to 250 feet in Franklin County.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** In parts of the range, the foodplants are woody species such as willows (*Salix* spp.), poplars (*Populus* spp.), and birches (*Betula* spp.). In NC, however, oaks (*Quercus* spp.) might be a major foodplant. [Willows, poplars, and birches are absent in many areas where Dreamys are common in NC.] Observers who have seen the isolated populations of Dreamys in the northern Piedmont have found sizable numbers of Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) trees nearby; could this legume be a foodplant over much of the NC range? Adults of the species nectar to some extent, but all duskywing adults are most often seen perched on the ground, especially on dirt roads and trails.

**COMMENTS:** Observers were able to fill in many county gaps in the Mountains, and also found them at Hanging Rock State Park in Stokes County, and in the Brushy Mountains in Alexander County, in 1995. Shocking discoveries were made in spring 2001, when Randy Emmitt found the species to be locally numerous in Caswell Game Land and I found a sizable population in Hill Forest in northern Durham County. It was found farther east in Franklin County in 2002. These counties are not overly out-of-range, as the species does range across nearly all of the VA Piedmont and even into that state's Coastal Plain. Despite it being a Northern species, Dreamy Duskywing is one of the most often seen butterflies in May in Mountain forests. Counts of 50 or more can be made on good days, and I found them quite numerous in the South Mountains (in the western Piedmont) in late April 2000.