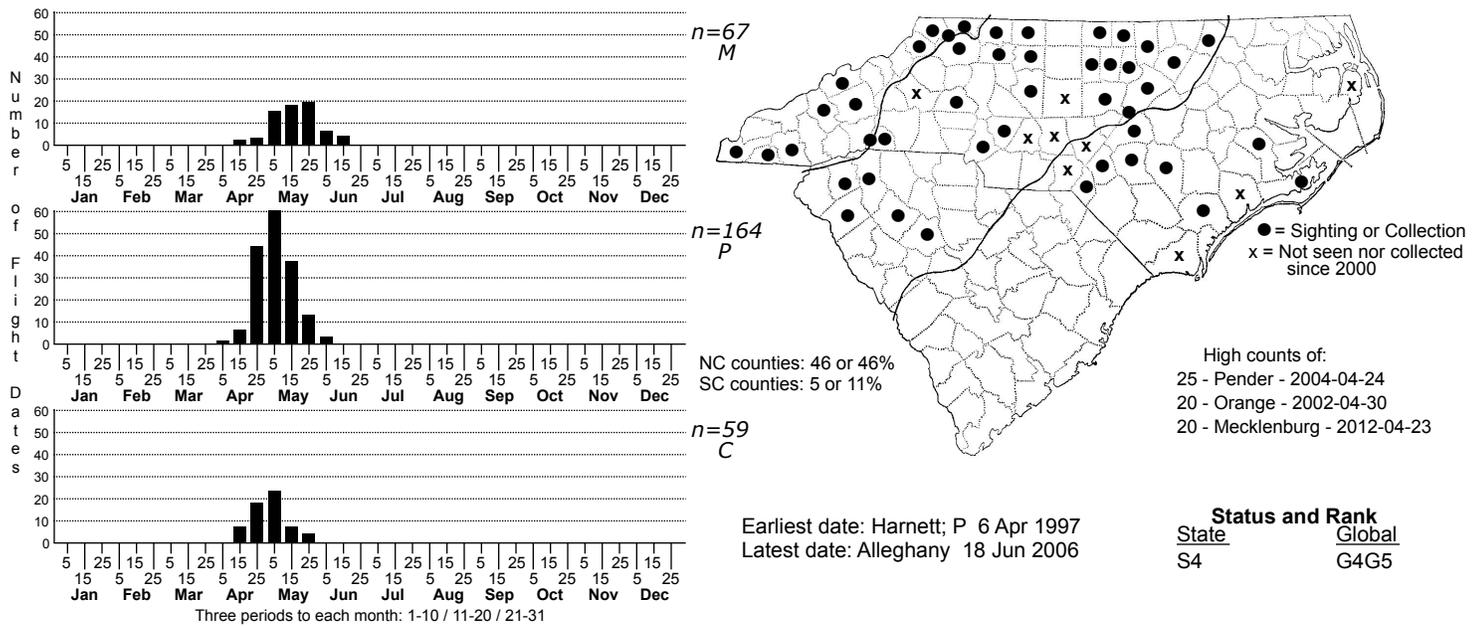


Dusted Skipper *Atrytonopsis hianna*



DISTRIBUTION: Somewhat statewide, though seemingly absent from nearly all of the northern half of the Coastal Plain, for unknown reasons. A number of holes in the Piedmont and Mountains part of the range, though it is likely present in nearly all counties in these two provinces.

ABUNDANCE: Seemingly declining in recent years. Uncommon in the eastern Piedmont, but seemingly rare in the western Piedmont; uncommon in the Sandhills, though with few recent records there. The scarcity of recent records for the southeastern Piedmont is concerning, as with the Sandhills. Elsewhere in the Coastal Plain it is very rare (to possibly absent in some central and northern counties), though it does occur in some coastal counties and can be numerous in a few places. Rare to locally uncommon in the Mountains.

FLIGHT PERIOD: A single rather brief flight period; flies from mid-April to early June downstate, and from early May (rarely in April) to mid-June in the Mountains. The peak in the Piedmont is late April to mid-May. Based on about 290 records from the state, unlike with the other two *Atrytonopsis* skippers in NC, this species has only a single brood in late spring, instead of another in mid- to late summer.

HABITAT: This species occurs in upland brushy places with much bluestem/broomsedge grasses (*Schizachyrium* and *Andropogon* spp.). Habitats include powerline clearings, old fields, brushy wooded borders, and open pine/scrub oak sandhills. In the lower Coastal Plain, it occurs in pine flatwoods. It is seldom, if ever, found in damp areas.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are bluestems/broomsedges. The species nectars on many flowers that bloom in the spring, such as blackberries and dewberries (*Rubus* spp.), and others. Like many other spring-flying skippers, they are frequently seen basking on dirt and other bare ground. Males are often seen perching on the tips of grass blades, waiting to chase anything that flies by.

COMMENTS: Dot maps can be misleading for single-brooded species that are on the wing for just a month or so. If observers are not in the right place in that narrow window, they will have to wait a full year to try again. The Dusted Skipper is certainly not common, but it can be found with a purposeful search. Late April to mid-May is the peak time in the Piedmont, and a little effort along an upland powerline clearing at that time can yield one to several Dusted Skippers. Its status, however, in the Mountains, upper Piedmont, and much of the Coastal Plain needs more work.

In the southern coastal counties, two additional species of *Atrytonopsis* are present -- Loammi Skipper (*A. loammi* [perhaps extirpated]) and the newly described Crystal Skipper (*A. quinteri*). See the next two accounts for more details. Most recent references consider the Dusted Skipper to be distinct from them, in part (if not mainly) because Dusted is single-brooded and the others are multiple-brooded. Note that Crystal Skipper, a coastal species, flies near the same time frame in spring as does the Dusted Skipper, but even though only a few miles from Dusted Skipper populations, it has a distinct second brood in summer. The Dusted thus "has time" for a second brood in NC and elsewhere in the South, but no such brood has been found. Pelham (2023), the reference that this website uses now for scientific names and sequence, considers all three as valid species.