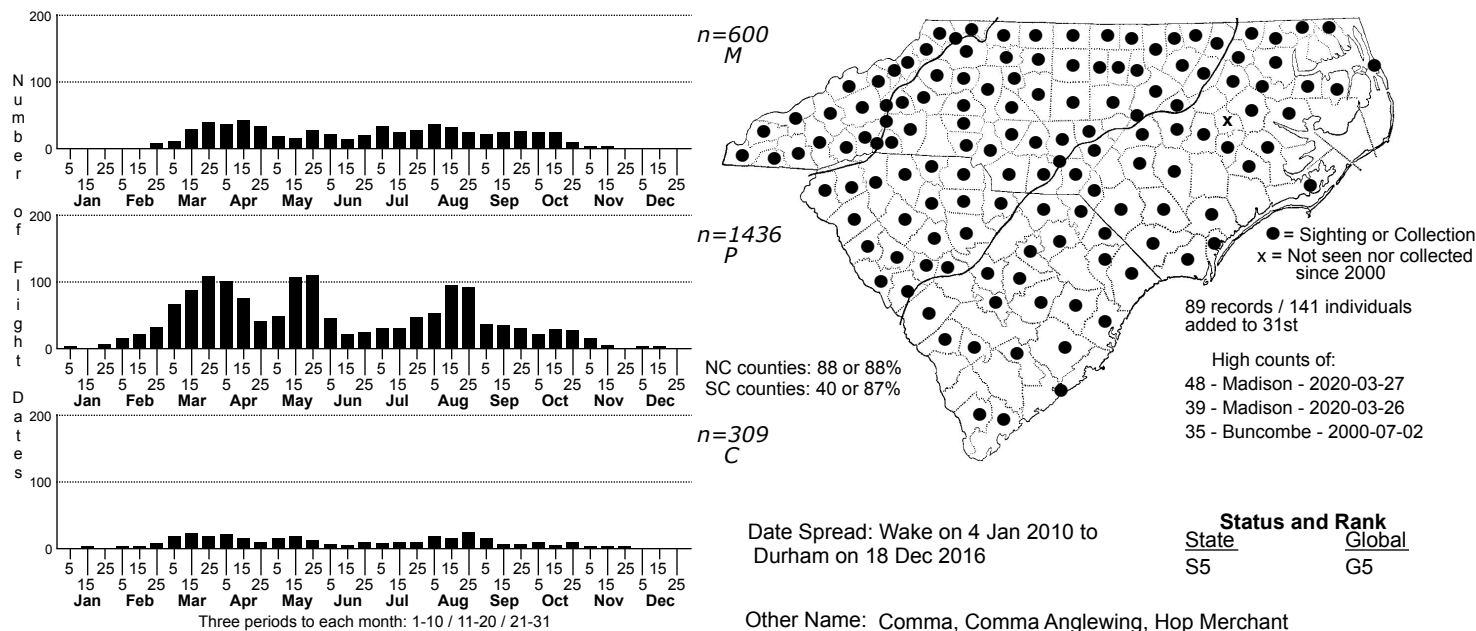


Eastern Comma *Polygonia comma*



DISTRIBUTION: Essentially statewide, but a number of counties in the Coastal Plain are lacking records. However, probably occurs, at least on rare occasions, in all counties. The first and only report for the Outer Banks was made in 2006.

ABUNDANCE: Uncommon to often fairly common in the Mountains, but only at times fairly common in the Piedmont; uncommon in the upper Coastal Plain, but rare in the lower Coastal Plain. Less common than the Question Mark; usually outnumbered about 3:1 by that species in most places where both occur.

FLIGHT PERIOD: As with the Question Mark, there are two broods. Adults overwinter and can occasionally be seen in mid- to late winter. Adults are normally on the wing by February in the Piedmont, and starting by March elsewhere. The first new brood is present in May and early June; they fly sporadically into August, but many individuals aestivate. The second new brood emerges in August and flies to late October, rarely to mid-November, after which the butterflies overwinter by hibernating in hollow logs and other highly sheltered places.

HABITAT: The habitat is identical to that of the Question Mark in NC -- deciduous or mixed forests, usually where moist; generally along openings such as dirt roads or trails, or along forest edges. It also frequently perches on dirt roads and trails.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Nettles (Urticaceae) are the main foodplants, but elms (Ulmus spp.) are also used. Feeding habits of adults are like those of the Question Mark -- seldom at flowers, but often seen on roads and trails, at sap on trees, carrion, etc.

COMMENTS: This is a fast and erratic flier, often difficult to identify positively on the wing. Perched individuals are also wary and difficult to approach to see the field marks well. Fortunately, in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, only the Question Mark can be confused with it, but in the Mountains the Gray Comma and the Green Comma also are found (though both are very rare). More field work needs to be done near the northeastern coast to see if the species really is rare in the Albemarle/Pamlico area.

For several years, the Butterflies of America website has listed the common name for this species as Comma Anglewing. Even though the Green Comma is listed there as Green Anglewing and the Gray Comma is listed as Gray Anglewing, that website has retained Question Mark as a common name, as opposed to Question Mark Anglewing. Because nearly all reference books and field guides, as well as NatureServe Explorer, still use "xxxxx Comma" for common names for the first three species, we will retain Eastern Comma, Green Comma, and Gray Comma as common names on this website, for at least the near future.