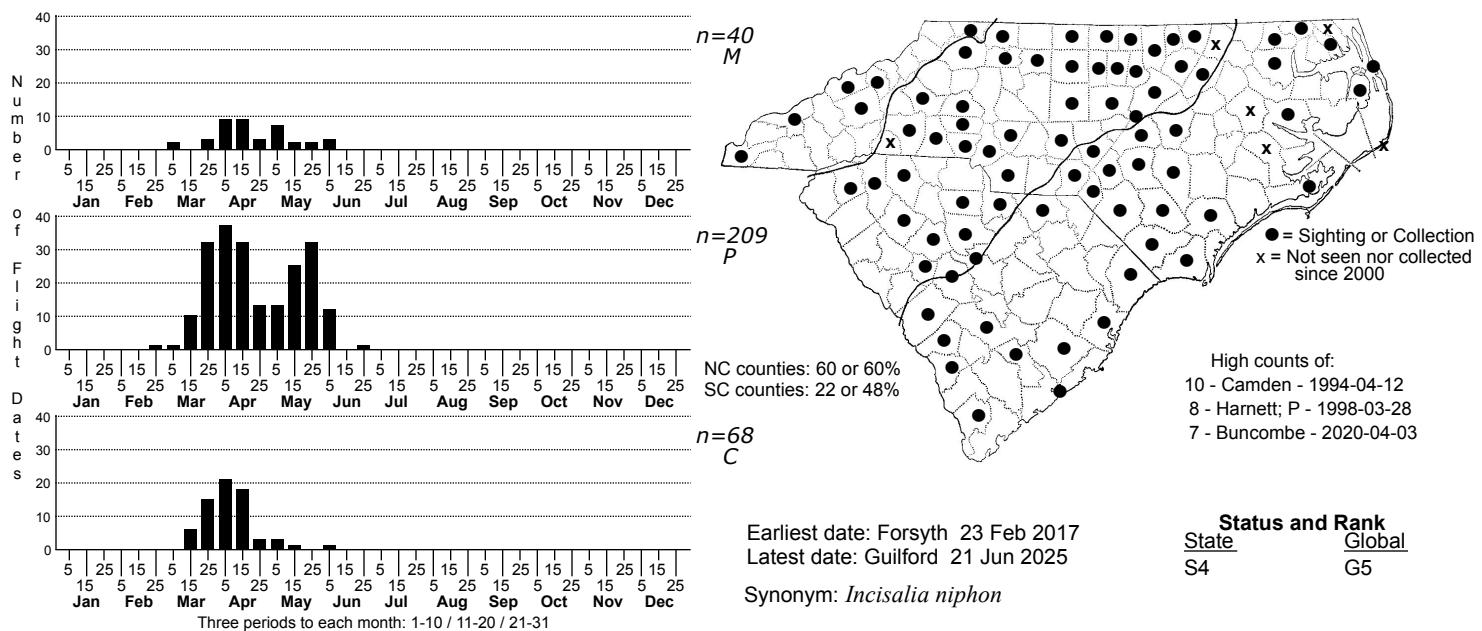


Eastern Pine Elfin *Callophrys niphon*



DISTRIBUTION: Scattered across the state; however, scarce in the Mountains, and spottily distributed over parts of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain (though it likely occurs in all counties in these two provinces).

ABUNDANCE: Rare to uncommon in the Coastal Plain and most of the Piedmont; very rare to rare in the Mountains. Probably restricted to the lower elevations in the Mountains. The much greater number of records (including numbers of counties where recorded) from the Piedmont than from the Coastal Plain is likely due to the much greater amount of field work done in this heavily populated region.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Supposedly a single brood; unlike with the other three elfins, this brood is either a long one or butterflies emerge at widely varying times. Occurs from mid-March to early June; the peak is late March to mid- or late April, but there is a clear, secondary peak in late May. A report on February 23 (2017) is remarkably early.

HABITAT: Rather varied, but typically in the vicinity of sapling or seedling pines. Most sightings are along edges of pine or mixed woodlands or in or near clearcuts with young pines, but individuals may occur in the interior of open pine forests.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Various pines (*Pinus* spp.) are the foodplants, but Loblolly (*P. taeda*) and Shortleaf (*P. echinata*) pines seem to be preferred. Nectar plants are varied, but may include blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.), and shrubs or trees in the rose family (Rosaceae), especially cherries and plums (both in the genus *Prunus*). As with other elfins, they may also be seen on dirt roads and trails obtaining moisture and minerals.

COMMENTS: This elfin is difficult to search for purposefully, simply because suitable habitat is so abundant. It is most likely to be found by examining flowers in spring along the sunny edges of pine or mixed woods or along the edges of old fields. The wide spread of the "single flight" period is troublesome; I have seen one as early as March 9, yet we have many records in late May and early June; these individuals were not obviously worn. There may be only one brood (as all elfin species are single-brooded), but there are certainly two flight periods! Further research, or explanation, is needed!