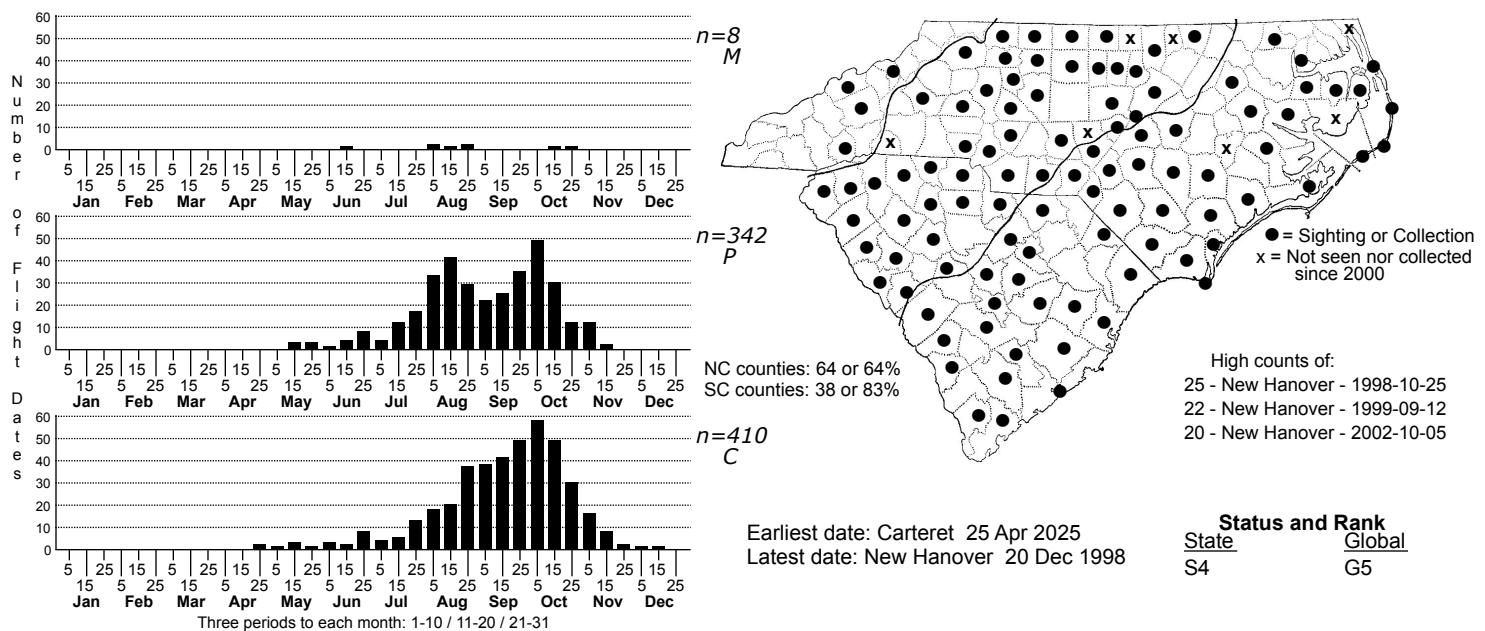


## Eufala Skipper *Lerodea eufala*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout most of the Coastal Plain and Piedmont, but scarce in the northern portions of these provinces. Only eight records from the Mountains, where certainly just a migrant/vagrant. How much of our population is migratory is unknown, but it is probably not a resident in much of the Piedmont, at least in the northwestern portion; it is definitely a breeding resident in the central and southern parts of the Coastal Plain and in the southeastern Piedmont. Gratifyingly, there were three new counties added in 2016, mainly documented with photos -- Buncombe, Surry, and Yadkin. Davidson and Madison were added in 2019 -- the latter just the fourth county for the Mountains. In 2020, three more counties were added -- Catawba, Duplin, and Granville; two more -- Rockingham and Warren -- were added in 2021. There is still a scarcity of records for the northern half of the Coastal Plain, owing mostly to the comparative scarcity of observers there versus the Piedmont; as this is a more Southerly species, it should probably be more numerous there than in the northern Piedmont, which has had much more field work taken place.

**ABUNDANCE:** Generally scarce in the state prior to late August. Usually uncommon to locally fairly common, but easily overlooked, in the extreme southeastern corner of the state (Brunswick and New Hanover counties) in the fall season. Uncommon in the Sandhills and most of the southern half of the Coastal Plain, and quite scarce in the northern Coastal Plain. In the Piedmont, rare to uncommon in the southern and eastern counties; rare to very uncommon north of Moore and Cabarrus counties. Sadly, the species went completely unreported from the entire Coastal Plain in 2014. However, 2020 was a banner year, with several dozen new records, perhaps in part to immigration into the state but perhaps also to much better overwinter survival of life stages in 2019-2020. And this banner year was followed up by a quite spectacular year in 2021, with 50 records, many of these in the Piedmont. Most recent years have typically had about 45-50 records in the state.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods in NC, but much of the population in late summer and fall might be composed of migrants. Most numerous after mid-September, with peak numbers well into October. Though there is a dip in records in the Piedmont in September, hinting at two broods, there is no such gap in the Coastal Plain. These flight charts might suggest a migrant species, but whether this species truly migrates into the state is not certain; it certainly isn't obvious to observers as being "migratory". We would consider it a "winter-stressed" species, whereby stages of the life cycle take such a hit over the winter season that few adults are on the wing during the first half of the year. However, based on the very meager 2014 records, it does seem that the species is at least partly migratory, as most migrant species had very poor years in the state in 2014.

**HABITAT:** This species likes various open country where the vegetation is low. Habitats include weedy fields, roadsides, wood margins, powerline clearings, savannas, gardens, and vacant lots. It is usually seen on or close to the ground, even when nectaring.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Various grasses are the foodplants. The species nectars on a wide array of flowers, but it favors those that bloom close to the ground; it does, however, nectar on taller plants in arboretums and gardens, such as vervains (*Verbena* spp.) and lantana.

**COMMENTS:** This can be a reasonably numerous species in the southeastern part of the state in late summer and fall, at least in some years. It is a small species, and all small species seem to favor flowers close to the ground, such as Sawtooth Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) or Mexican-clovers (*Richardia* spp.), where they are easily overlooked by the observer. It looks at first glance like a Swarthy Skipper, but the Eufala has no pale veins on the ventral hind wing, may or may not have a few faint spots in a vertical line on the ventral hind wing, but always has two or three white spots and a white bar on the upper fore wing, which the Swarthy lacks. The white body of the Eufala, as seen from below, is also a good mark; when a butterfly lands, it gives one or two quick wing flaps, another good field mark.