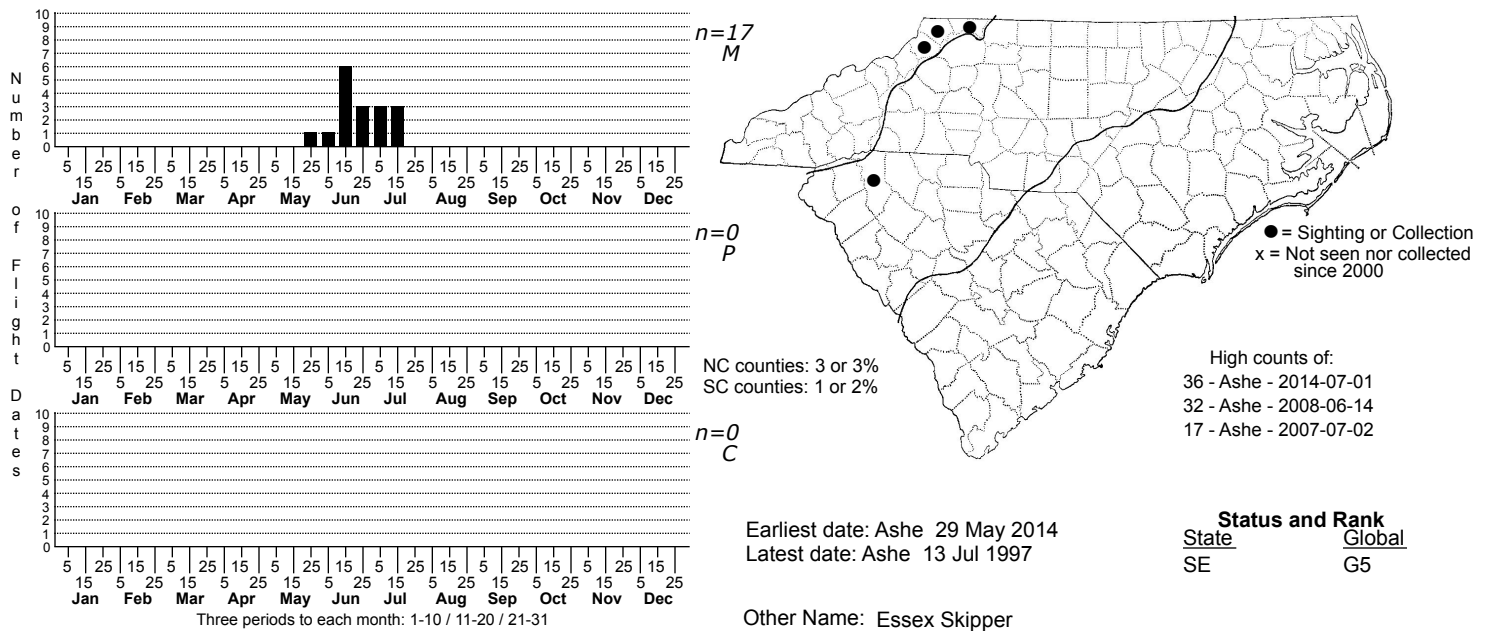


European Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*



DISTRIBUTION: Known only from the extreme northern Mountains, where first found in Alleghany County in 1993, in Ashe County in 1997, and in Watauga County in 2007. This introduced species (into Ontario, Canada, in 1910) was thought in the 1990's and 2000's to still be expanding its range southward; however, that expansion seems to have slowed or stopped in the 21st Century, as there are no recent records from new locales (even within these three counties). The single record from SC, assuming a correct identification, appears to be somewhat old.

ABUNDANCE: Seems to be declining over the past five to ten years, as have many small skippers. Quite local within its small range in the state, but can be (or at least was) common at a few sites in Ashe County; seemingly rare elsewhere despite much apparently suitable habitat, especially so along or near the Blue Ridge Parkway.

FLIGHT PERIOD: A single brood; very late May to mid-July.

HABITAT: This is a denizen of pastures, meadows, and other fields, including grassy balds -- mainly where there are non-native grasses. These grassy places can range from somewhat moist meadows to high elevation "balds".

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Timothy (*Phleum pratense*), an introduced grass, is the usual foodplant, but other grasses are certainly used. These skippers often nectar, at low plants. Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is the main nectar source in NC.

COMMENTS: It is not at all surprising that the species is now found in NC, at least close to the VA border. In 1993, I found two or three European Skippers in the same meadow as Peck's Skippers, nectaring on red clovers. Tom Howard and several other members of the Carolina Butterfly Society found a colony of four individuals in Ashe County in a meadow in July 1997, and I relocated the colony on the next day. I photographed several of the nine individuals that Jeff Phippen and I encountered in this same Ashe County meadow in late June 1998. This is likely the first documentation of the species in the state. Jonathan Mays observed one at a new site in Alleghany County in 2005, the first record for the state since 1998. In 2007 Ted Wilcox found the species at several sites in Ashe County and at one in Watauga County; and he recorded the first double-digit daily count for this species in NC, including 32 in one day. In 2014, it was found at two locations on Pond Mountain; and Brian Bockhahn had a state record of 36 adults there on July 1.

Oddly, the European Skipper has not been found in the numerous meadows along the Blue Ridge Parkway in VA or NC by Clyde Kessler (pers. comm.) over the past few years, nor has any other observer found the species in NC in meadows along the Parkway, despite dozens of butterfly reports from these meadows in recent years in June and the first half of July. Such meadows, generally leased to local farmers, often contain Timothy grass and much Red Clover, seemingly excellent habitat. Then again, as this is an introduced species, maybe its apparent absence is "good news", though there are likely few native species that would be impacted by European Skippers (at least in small or moderate numbers).

Note that in Europe, its native range, the species goes by the common name of Essex Skipper. That name has been added to this website, under "Other Name". Many of us are eagerly awaiting the day some North American checklists start using its correct name, and not the silly name of European Skipper. Imagine if a North American skipper species such as the Fiery Skipper were introduced into Europe; should it really be called the American Skipper on that continent? Of course not!