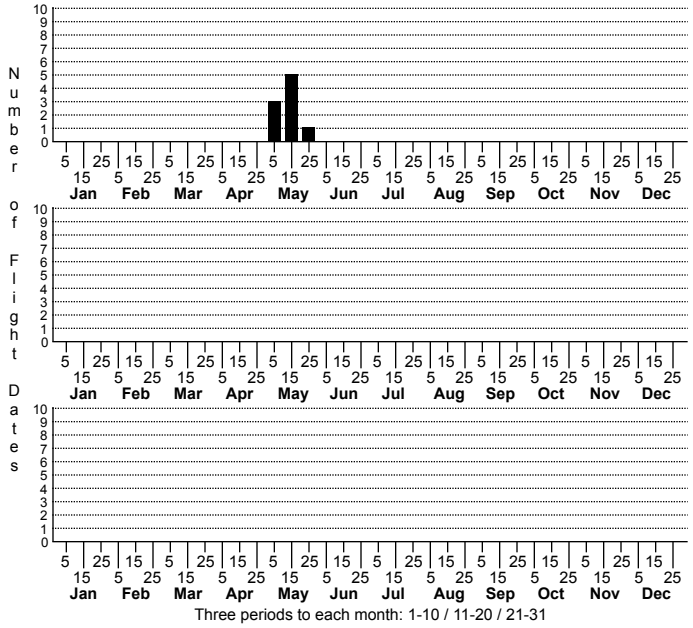
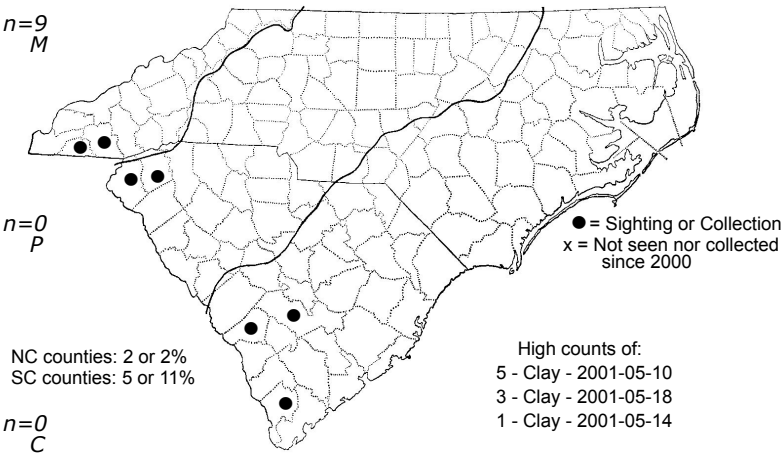
Gorgone Checkerspot *Chlosyne gorgone*





Earliest date: Clay 4 May 2003
Latest date: Clay 27 May 2005

Status and Rank

State	Global
SR - S1?	G5

DISTRIBUTION: Restricted to the extreme southwestern corner of the state, where known only from Clay and Macon counties. The species is found in the Mountains of adjacent GA and the upper Piedmont of SC; thus, its discovery in 2001 in Clay County and in 2002 in Macon County was not a complete surprise.

ABUNDANCE: Very rare, assuming that it is still present; the last record was in 2005. So far, found only at three sites in the state, but with no records in the past two decades, despite much searching in early and mid-May. As its habitats might be widespread, it likely is still present somewhere in that region.

FLIGHT PERIOD: At the Clay County sites, it apparently flies for a few weeks in May, and likely again later in summer. It does have two broods in northern GA, flying into mid-August; however, Ron Gatrelle and others have yet to find the species in summer or fall in NC, despite much field work where it occurs in May.

HABITAT: In Clay County, it is found along wooded borders, along logging roads, and in powerlines, and probably in open woods and glades -- but in dry situations. The Macon County site is a fairly high ridge. The species is typically found in dry to mesic situations; the similar Silvery Checkerspot is often found in moist wooded areas but does range into dry areas to overlap in habitat with the Gorgone.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: As with the Silvery Checkerspot, this species favors sunflowers (Helianthus spp.) and perhaps other tall yellow-flowering composites; however, Woodland Sunflower (H. divaricatus) is known as a foodplant in GA and is present at the site in Clay County, NC. Nectar plants are not well known in NC.

COMMENTS: Ron Gatrelle discovered this species in NC on May 10, 2001. Interestingly, he found the species at elevations from 3400 to 3600 feet, a surprisingly high elevation; those in GA have been found no higher than 2000 feet (Gatrelle, pers. comm.). The general area where he found the species is considerably drier, and more glady, than most of the remainder of Clay County, and probably has a warmer microclimate than most sites in the county at that elevation. The Gorgone Checkerspot should also be looked for in adjacent Cherokee County, which has a considerable amount of dry forests.

In 2002, Gatrelle located a new site in Macon County, on a surprisingly high ridge, over 4000 feet elevation. The species was relocated by Jeff Pippen and me at one of the Clay County sites; however, this site has been repeatedly checked in recent years without finding the species. Because of its small size and potential to colonize new early succession sites or small openings, it is much too soon to assume that it is gone from this general area in Clay County, especially considering that suitable habitat is likely still widespread. In addition, relatively few observers have visited the known locations during the past 15 years to search for this species; however, a Carolina Butterfly Society field trip failed to find the species in mid-May 2018.

Though the Gorgone looks very similar above to a Silvery Checkerspot, it is reasonably different below. It could certainly be overlooked, especially by people not suspecting Gorgone and thus not paying attention to look carefully at the under wings. Beginners could also overlook the species as a Pearl Crescent, as the Gorgone averages slightly smaller than Silvery and can overlap in size with the Pearl.