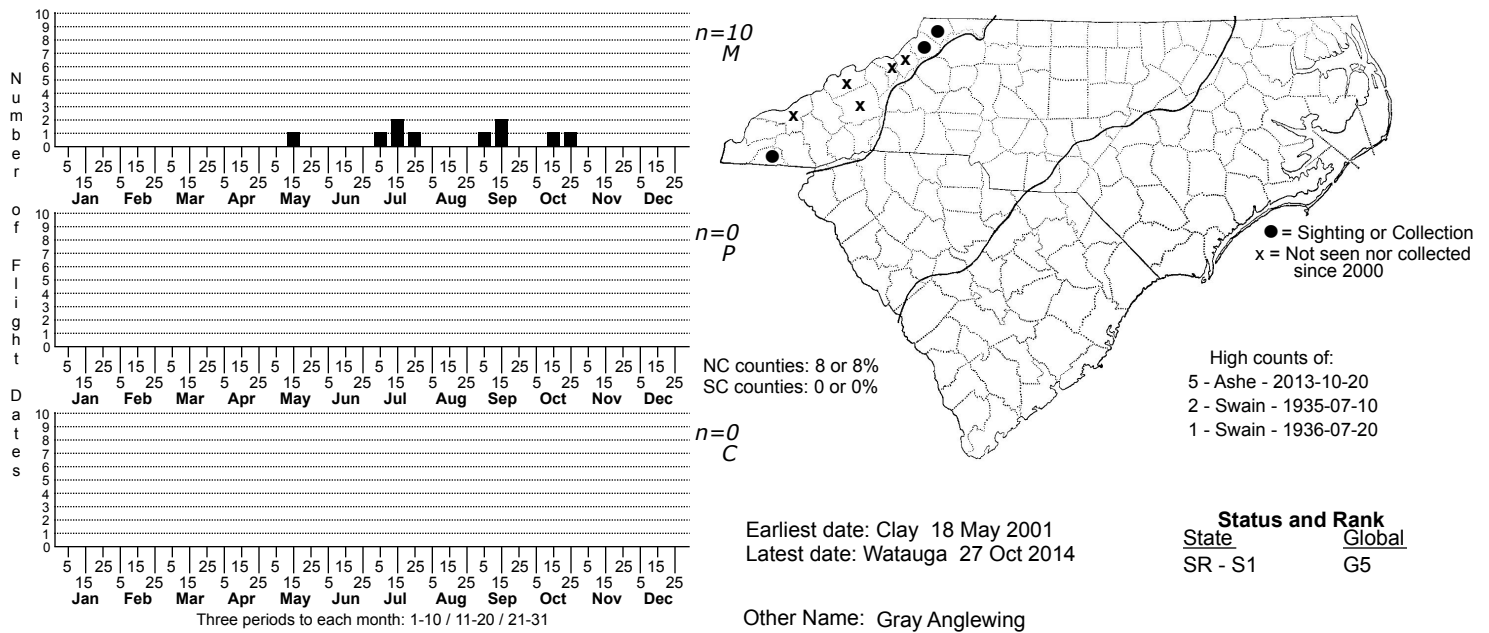


## Gray Comma *Polygona progne*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Mountains only, recorded south to Clay County. As there are no records from GA or SC, the record from Clay County in 2001 represents the southern end of the range.

**ABUNDANCE:** Extremely rare to very rare, with records from just eight counties. Records from five of these eight counties are older than 20 years, thus indicating a decline in numbers of the species in recent decades. The last record was in 2014, but the species should still occur in the mountains, as suitable habitat is still present.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Poorly known in NC. Believed to be two broods, with adults overwintering and flying in spring. The first new brood flies from June to August, supposedly. The second brood flies in the fall, and then overwinters. I saw one in Buncombe County on July 12, 1991; one was seen on September 8, 1994 by a U.S. Forest Service biologist; Ron Gatrelle noted one on May 18, 2001; and Ted Wilcox photographed a fresh individual (in Watauga County) on September 13, 2008. A new late date, by over a month, was made by David Campbell on October 20, 2013 (see below); and an even later date was provided by Brian Bockhahn on October 27, 2014.

**HABITAT:** This species is found primarily in rich hardwood forests at high elevations (above 4000 feet), particularly along dirt roads or other openings. In NC, cove forests or northern hardwood forests are likely the primary habitats.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplants are gooseberries or currants (*Ribes* spp.), which are frequent in NC in cool moist forests. The species likely does not feed at flowers, but is found on damp spots in roads, sap, carrion, etc.

**COMMENTS:** I have seen the species once in NC, on a dirt road in the midst of a very rich forest in northeastern Buncombe County. To see the Gray Comma and the Green Comma in NC would likely require considerable driving, slowly, on dirt roads through cool forests; or, extensive hiking at high elevations along wide, sunlit trails. All *Polygona* individuals are very flighty and are easily flushed, often not to be seen again by the observer. This species flies slower than other anglewings, which might tip the observer to take a closer look at the butterfly in question. Further surveys in rich hardwoods in late summer and fall, even in October, are needed to elucidate the range of the Gray Comma. The species might be on the verge of extirpation in NC, but as potential habitat is common, surely some Gray Commas must still be present in the state (as evidenced by the 2008 record from Watauga County). Thankfully, in fall 2013, David Campbell got the idea to place some rotten bananas in potential habitat in southern Ashe County, near a stand of gooseberries (foodplants); he was rewarded by seeing a state-record five individual Gray Commas coming to the bait on October 20!

As explained on the Eastern Comma page, we are retaining the common name as Gray Comma, as opposed to Gray Anglewing, as is used on the Butterflies of America website; most references use Gray Comma as the common name.