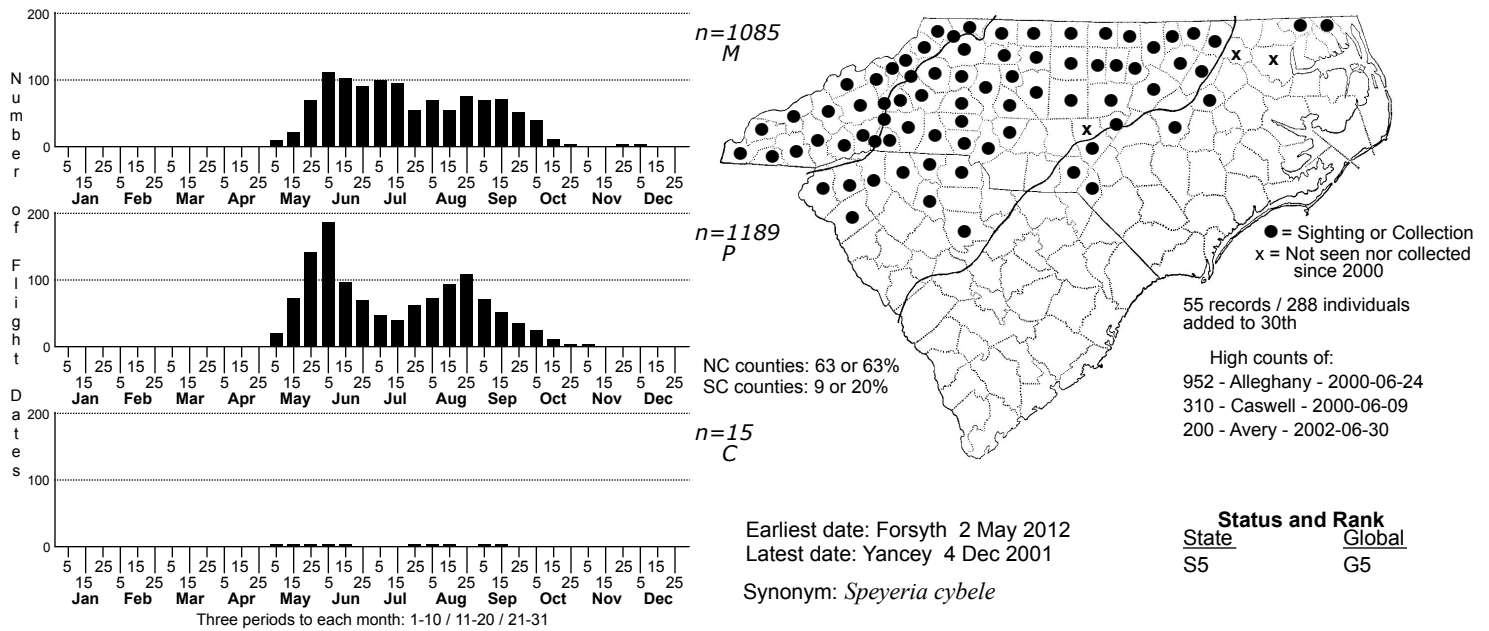


Great Spangled Fritillary *Argynnis cybele*



DISTRIBUTION: Throughout the mountains, and nearly throughout the Piedmont, though scarce to locally absent in the southeastern Piedmont. In the Coastal Plain (where essentially not a resident species), it has been found only at a few sites near the Piedmont and the northern Coastal Plain. It could perhaps be a breeding resident in a few far northern Coastal Plain counties, as it is a resident over nearly all of VA; however, it certainly is only a visitor/stray in the Sandhills region of the southwestern Coastal Plain. Even in very well-worked Wake County, in the eastern Piedmont, no resident sites are known.

ABUNDANCE: Common to locally abundant in the mountains, being more common in the northern mountains than near GA. In the Piedmont, fairly common to locally common along the northern tier of counties east to Halifax County; however, it is uncommon in the central Piedmont, being especially scarce in the southeastern Piedmont, where it is perhaps absent as a breeding species in a few counties. It is essentially just a stray/vagrant, however, in the Coastal Plain, as there have not been "repeatable" sightings at any location where initially seen.

FLIGHT PERIOD: A single brood, but an extensive spread of dates; mid-May to mid-October, rarely later. Whether the peaks and valleys shown on the flight charts are real is not known, but there does seem to be a "burst" of flight activity for the first month of the flight period. It is suspected that some aestivation of individuals occurs in midsummer, especially in July.

HABITAT: This is an open-country species, being most common in meadows, especially along streams through pastures, in the mountains. It is also found in various weedy fields, clearcuts, thickets, woodland borders, and (less commonly) in woodland openings.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are violets (*Viola* spp.) of various species. This species is commonly seen nectaring; milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) are favored, but Joe-pye-weeds (*Eutrochium* spp.), ironweeds (*Vernonia* spp.), Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*), and other tall herbs or shrubs are often used, especially those of moist meadows or open streambanks.

COMMENTS: This is one of the more frequently seen and "obvious" butterflies in the mountains. The Fall Line forms the edge of the species' (resident status) range, and thus it is not too surprising that the species is not common in the southeastern Piedmont and might be absent as a breeder in a few counties. However, it can be occasionally common as far east as Warren and Halifax counties, along the VA border.