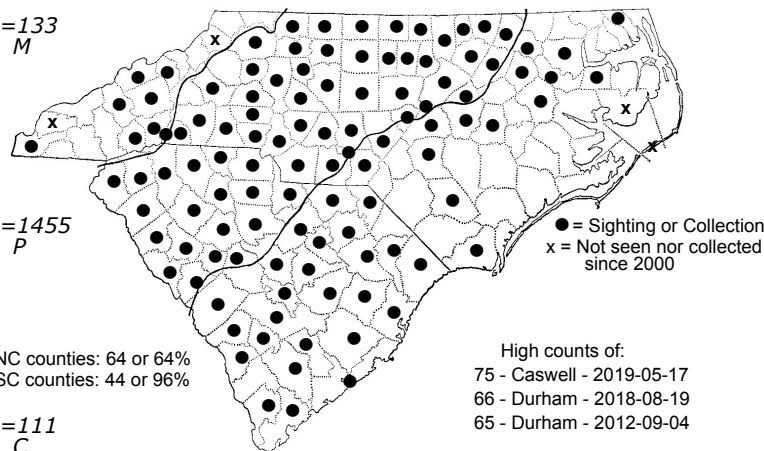
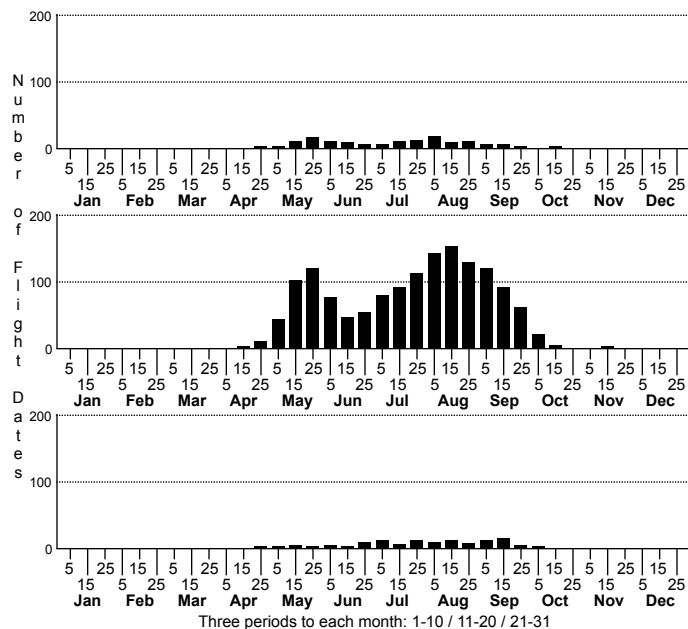


Hackberry Emperor *Asterocampa celtis*



Earliest date: Anson 19 Apr 2023
Latest date: Durham 18 Nov 2010

Status and Rank
State: S5
Global: G5

Other Name: Hackberry Butterfly

DISTRIBUTION: Throughout the Piedmont; scattered in the Coastal Plain, mainly along brownwater rivers in the upper half of the province. In the Mountains probably found only at low elevations. There are few records known from the southern half of the Coastal Plain, mostly close to the Cape Fear River. As there are records from most of the SC Coastal Plain counties, it likely occurs in most of the NC Coastal Plain counties, but there are clearly some distribution anomalies between these two states.

ABUNDANCE: Locally fairly common to common in the Piedmont. Rare to locally uncommon in the upper Coastal Plain; rare to possibly absent in counties that lack brownwater rivers. Limited in the Mountains presumably to low elevations, where rare to locally uncommon. This is not a widespread butterfly in North Carolina, it being rather colonial in nature, and can be uncommon over large areas of the range in the Piedmont.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Two broods -- early May (rarely in late April) to late June, and late June to early October (with some individuals in the latter part possibly from a tiny third brood). Much more data needed for the Mountains and the Coastal Plain, and whether the Piedmont has just two broods.

HABITAT: The species is limited to areas with hackberries or sugarberries (*Celtis* spp.). Thus, it is found inside bottomland forests of the Piedmont and brownwater bottomlands of the Coastal Plain, where *Celtis laevigata* and *C. smallii* are found; it may also be found in other forests or along their edges, as long as *Celtis* is present. It is also found in dry upland forests, usually over mafic rock, where *C. tenuifolia* occurs. It is often found along dirt or paved roads through bottomlands, and is found of railroad tracks through suitable habitat also. The butterflies may also be found in the dappled shade deep inside forests.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are strictly hackberries and sugarberries of the genus *Celtis*. Adults do not nectar, but feed on sap, decaying fruit, carrion, mud, etc. Adults have the unusual habit of drinking perspiration from humans; the butterflies often alight on clothing or bare skin, and can be studied at very close range!

COMMENTS: The Hackberry Emperor is somewhat habitat limited in NC; however, because it is tied to a few tree species, it can be searched for with some degree of success in bottomlands with an abundant amount of Sugarberry (*C. laevigata*) or, less commonly, in uplands with Dwarf Hackberry (*C. tenuifolia*).

The species is very widespread in the Coastal Plain of SC, into FL. Yet, we have barely 110 flight date records for the NC Coastal Plain, and it has been found in barely 25% of the Coastal Plain counties. These odd results are apparently due to the discrepancy in the distribution of *Celtis* (mainly *C. laevigata*). This large tree is limited in the NC Coastal Plain mostly to brownwater rivers (Roanoke, Tar, Neuse, and Cape Fear). In the SC Coastal Plain, this tree is much more widespread and is often numerous even in coastal counties.