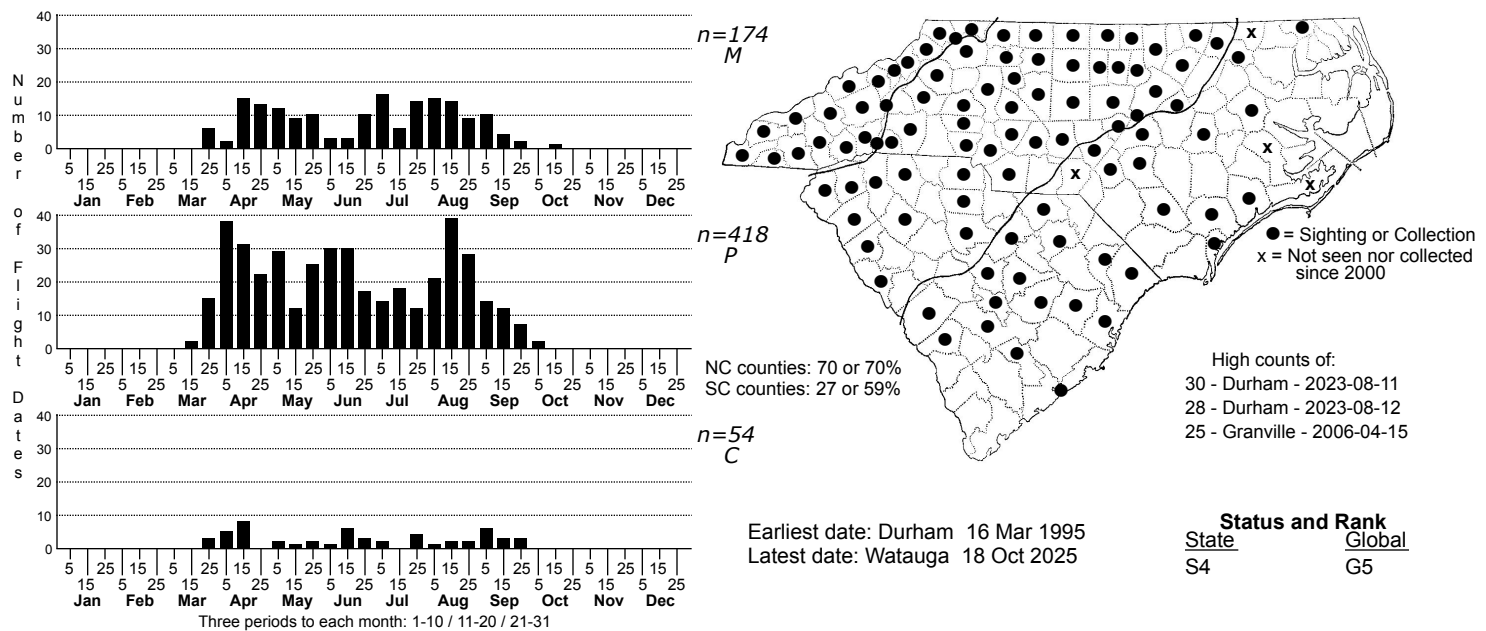


# Harvester *Feniseca tarquinius*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Present throughout the Mountains and Piedmont, but spottily distributed over most of the Coastal Plain. Apparently absent in some far eastern counties.

**ABUNDANCE:** Widespread, but scarce; most "numerous" in the Mountains, though uncommon there. Rare to uncommon in most of the Piedmont, and very rare in the Coastal Plain. This is always a good find during the year for most butterflies. Considering that most records are of single individuals, rarely two in a day, the state has a good handful of double-digit counts, mostly in April and May; and a new state high count of 30 was tallied in August 2023.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Present from the latter half of March into early October; several to many broods. This species apparently has a very short generation cycle, perhaps as short as three weeks (Allen 1997). In WV, there "may be as many as 6 or more flights" (Allen 1997). More data needed in NC to determine number of flights and flight periods, especially in the Coastal Plain.

**HABITAT:** Favored habitats are alder-lined shores of lakes and ponds, openings along wooded creeks, and other types of alder thickets. It can also be found in openings in hardwood forests, generally near water, such as along dirt roads near creeks. It is usually not far from woolly aphid colonies. In general, however, most adults are seen by serendipity; it is generally a waste of time to intentionally search suitable habitat for this species.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Caterpillars feed on woolly aphids, especially on and near Hazel Alder (*Alnus serrulata*) growing along streambanks and in swampy woods. Aphids also frequently inhabit American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and a few colonies of Harvesters have been associated with this tree species. Adults do not nectar; they imbibe moisture and minerals from mud, or take aphid honeydew, dung, or carrion.

**COMMENTS:** This is an elusive butterfly that can be difficult to find. Harvesters often perch on leaves higher than 6 feet off the ground. They often remind one of an azure or a hairstreak in behavior as they typically fly at head height (or higher), with a quick and darting flight. They are most often seen on mud or wet ground, on dirt roads through hardwood forests, less often at damp spots on wooded trails. Such individuals are often ridiculously tame and can frequently be poked or enticed onto one's finger for close scrutiny.