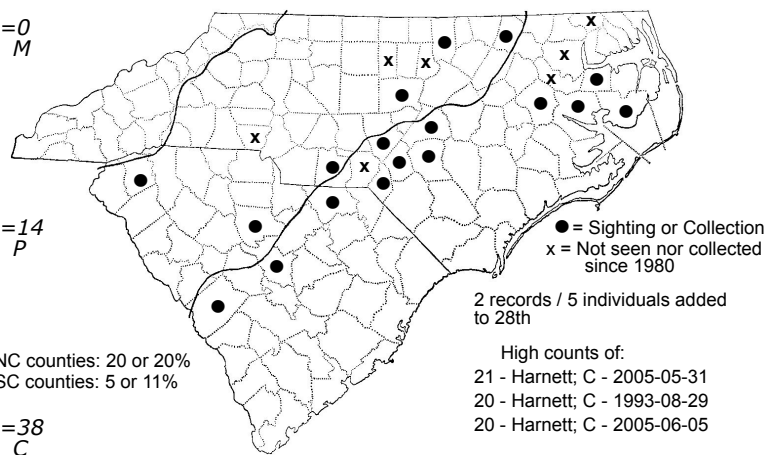
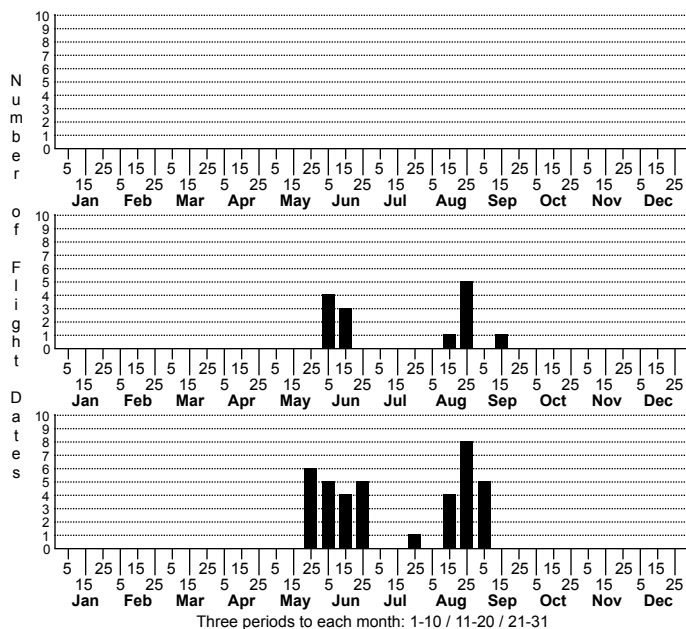


Helicta Satyr *Neonympha helicta*



Earliest date: Pitt 21 May 1995
Latest date: Durham 12 Sep 1967

Status and Rank
State Global
SR - S1? G3G4

Synonym: *Neonympha septentrionalis*, *Neonympha areolatus septentrionalis*

DISTRIBUTION: Apparently the northern half, and the inner portion, of the Coastal Plain, as well as (at least formerly) the lower Piedmont. The *Neonympha* species found in the southeastern Coastal Plain is believed to be solely the strict-sense Georgia Satyr (*N. areolatus*). As *N. helicta* is a fairly recently described species (1999), split off from the former broad-sense *N. areolatus*, there is much to be learned about the overlap of the two species, though it is clear that, at least in NC, *Helicta Satyr* is the more inland species and likely the only one to occur in the Piedmont. Gatrell (1999) mentions that both species have been collected in Hoke County, in the Sandhills region (and in Aiken County, SC, also in the Sandhills region). *Helicta* ranges north to VA and NJ; Georgia (strict sense) is believed to be absent north of NC. How far east *Helicta* ranges toward the coast is uncertain; records from the Pamlico Peninsula are mainly sightings prior to the split. Though Pelham (2020) only lists this taxon as a subspecies (i.e., *N. areolatus helicta*), Harry Pavulaan (pers. comm.), who has great familiarity with both species, strongly believes this lumping as a subspecies is a mistake, and this website will retain *Helicta Satyr* as a valid species for now.

ABUNDANCE: Strongly declining in the state. Formerly rare to very locally uncommon in the Sandhills; now quite rare there. Currently very rare in the upper Coastal Plain. Apparently also now casual to rare in the northern Coastal Plain, and casual to perhaps absent now in the Piedmont.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Two broods, probably similar to those of the Georgia Satyr, though apparently finishing earlier in fall (and not into October). Flights are from late May to late June, and mid-August to mid-September.

HABITAT: Experience with "Georgia Satyrs" in the NC Sandhills and lower Piedmont by Steve Hall and me indicate that *Helicta* (presumably) occurs in damp to wet "sedgy" areas such as low powerline clearings, frequently-burned pocosin or beaver pond margins, and low road shoulders. However, sites in Durham and Granville counties were associated with glade-like edges and openings on high pH soils. Much more information is needed on habitats in the northern Coastal Plain and elsewhere; those west of Pamlico Sound, of whatever species, have tended to be in wet grassy areas, ditches, and marsh edges.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are sedges, though Gatrell (1999) does not mention such foodplants. The species probably does not nectar often, but likely takes moisture and minerals at mud or dirt.

COMMENTS: Field marks mentioned in Gatrell (1999) separating *Helicta* from Georgia include: 1) *Helicta* averages slightly larger in size; 2) *Helicta* has a swifter and higher above ground flight than Georgia, which normally bobs slowly among savanna plants; 3) *Helicta* eye spots on the ventral hind wing are more elliptical in shape than the narrower, more elongated eye spots of Georgia; 4) *Helicta* has only tiny white dots inside the eye spots, whereas Georgia usually has one or two yellow bars or dots, as well as white dots, inside at least one or two eye spots; and 5) the two orange bands that encircle the eye spots in *Helicta* tend to remain separated, or meet only at the costal margin, whereas in Georgia these two bands join before the costal margin to form a closed orange loop. [However, essentially all photos of the complex taken in NC show a closed orange band at the top of the eyespots, a supposed mark for true Georgia.]

Sadly, there have been very few reports in the last decade for this species, or at least for any "inland Georgia Satyrs". Hall has found the species at several impact areas in Fort Bragg, but these areas are now off-limits to all biologists; Dave Pavlik photographed several at that base in 2020. There have been no reports at all from the Piedmont since about 1995, and it is practically now of historical occurrence in that province. Damp grasslands/glades within its range are now becoming fire suppressed, are being converted to agriculture or silviculture, or are being developed. For these reasons, the NC Natural Heritage Program is now tracking the species as Significantly Rare.