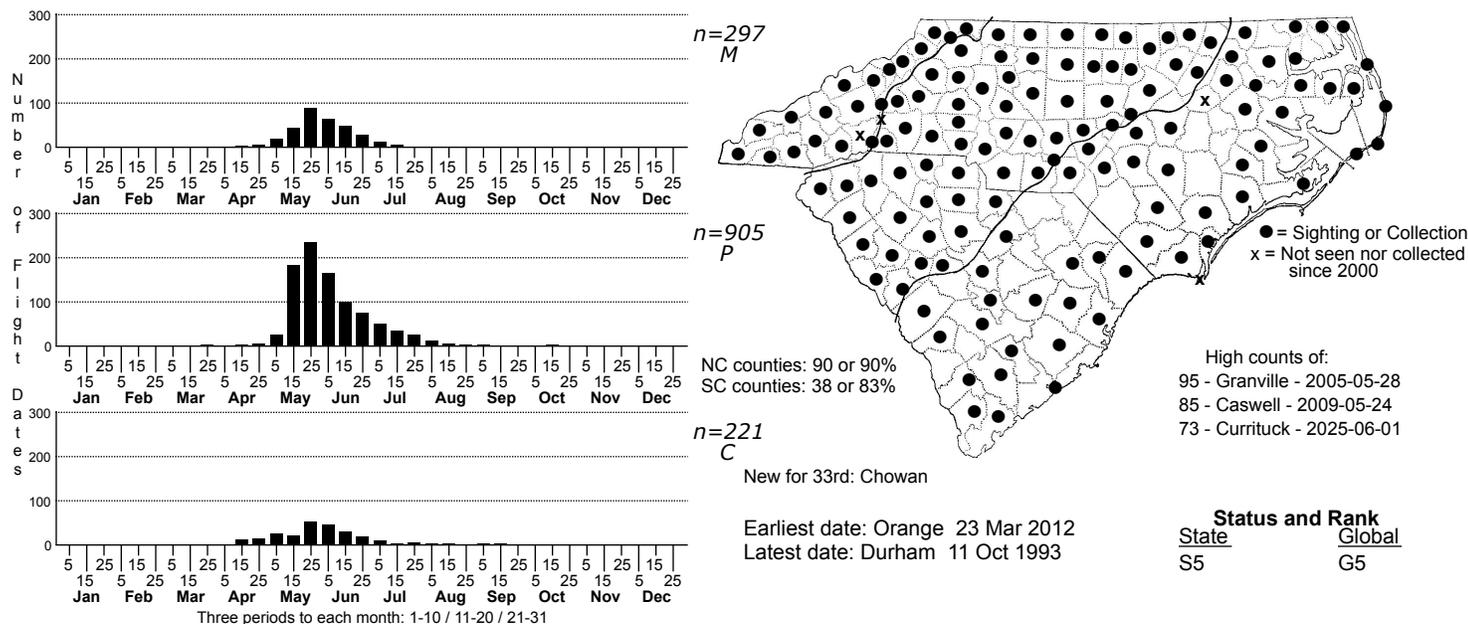


Little Wood-Satyr *Megisto cymela*



DISTRIBUTION: Statewide; probably occurs in all NC counties, though a number of counties in the Coastal Plain lack records.

ABUNDANCE: Fairly common to locally common in the northern Piedmont and northern Mountains, but mainly uncommon to fairly common (at best) in the central and southern parts of these provinces. In the Coastal Plain, it is uncommon to locally fairly common in the northern counties and near the southern coast, but it is quite scarce (rare to uncommon) over most of that province. It is less common in NC than in the Northeastern and Midwestern states. This northern abundance shows a bit here, as the three highest state one-day counts are all from counties bordering VA.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Seemingly one moderately long flight period, but a small brood may be present in late summer. Present from mid-April to very early September, very rarely in October; the great majority of records, especially in the Piedmont and Mountains, are from mid-May to early July. However, peak counts are in the early part of the flight period, in late May and early June. Most reports after July probably represent misidentified Carolina or Intricate satyrs, and most experienced butterflyers seldom see Little Wood-Satyrs after early or mid-July. Photos from August into October seem to be lacking.

HABITAT: This satyr is typically found along upland woodland borders or very open woods. It also occurs in old fields, clearcuts, "glades", powerline clearings, and other woodland openings. It can be numerous in and along the edges of maritime forests. This satyr favors upland sites as opposed to wetlands; it also appears to be more common over circumneutral soils in NC, a trait noted by Opler and others.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are grasses, mostly those of old fields and edges. As with other satyrs, adults seldom nectar, but feed on carrion, decaying fruit, sap, and moisture.

COMMENTS: This species is frequently seen bouncing along wooded edges, weaving around saplings and working briefly into the shade of the woodland edge. Little Wood-Satyrs can be identified on the wing; it is 1.5-2 times the size of the other satyr species.

A number of references have indicated that there is a second peak in the flight in July (in states to our north), and flight charts in more Northern states do show a clear second peak. Allen (1997) notes a second peak in WV but considers this part of a single brood, just delayed emergence and flight by some of the population. H. Pavulaan (1996 and pers. comm.) considers these as Type I and Type II, which may represent sibling species. Whatever the case, eggs laid by the females in May and June (Type I) do not produce Type II offspring, so there are not two broods. Confusing the matter is that Type I and Type II individuals range across all of VA. The Type II brood, though occurring in NC, is apparently scarce, barely showing on the flight chart; and it seems to be limited (as presently known) to the northern half of the Piedmont. Much more data are needed in NC, such as habitat, flight behavior, coloration, and amount of wear when seen, for such wood-satyrs seen in late June, July, and August. Another puzzling feature of this species, if indeed only one is present in the East, is that its flight in NC begins at practically the same time as it does in NJ (Gochfeld and Burger 1997) and NY (Glassberg 1999)! For essentially all other butterfly species, the flight of a given species begins two to four weeks earlier in central NC than it does in central NY. Might two species be involved?

The "Viola's Wood-Satyr", considered by Opler and Warren (2004), NatureServe, and Butterflies of America to be a subspecies of Little Wood-Satyr, was tentatively considered to occur along the southeastern coast of NC in the 13th Approximation. However, specimens and photos from this region, plus observations in 2006, suggest that these butterflies all belong to the nominate subspecies of Little Wood-Satyr. Thus, "Viola's", considered now as a subspecies in Pelham (2023), is only known as far north as coastal SC.