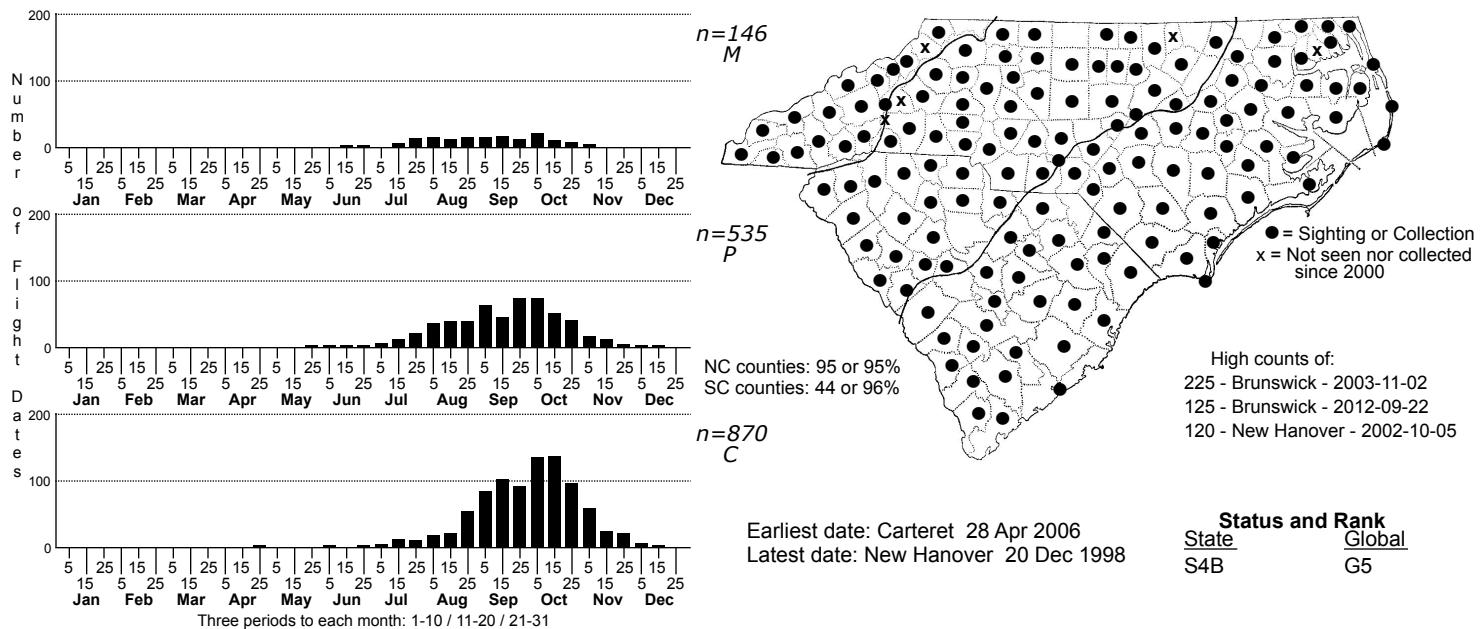


# Long-tailed Skipper *Urbanus proteus*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Records nearly over all parts of the state, though it is most frequently found in the southeastern Coastal Plain and is quite scarce in the northwestern and far northern parts of the state.

**ABUNDANCE:** A post-breeding migrant from the South and thus quite erratic in numbers from one year to the next; may be fairly common to common in some years in fall near the southern coast, north to Carteret and Craven counties. However, in some years it can be quite uncommon there and elsewhere in the Coastal Plain. Normally uncommon through the remainder of the Coastal Plain and the eastern and southern Piedmont; rare in the southern Mountains, and usually very rare in the northern Mountains. Numbers are reduced in years following severe winters, and also during and after drought conditions farther to the south.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** In NC, primarily from mid-July, rarely in June, to late November, and sparingly into mid-December. Peak numbers are in October, later than most skippers. Whether this fairly long flight period consists of just one brood or two is not clear, as there is no obvious dip in records in any of the three provinces in the middle of this 4-5-month-long flight period. It is also not clear if a few pupae survive the winter to produce fresh individuals in spring, as there are only a handful of state records prior to July.

**HABITAT:** Habitats are typical of those of southern migrants -- fields, gardens, woodland edges, and other "non-specialized" habitats where plenty of flowers are blooming. It does occur in savannas and flatwoods well away from civilization.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplants are various legumes (Fabaceae). The species nectars on many flowers, including deep-throated ones such as morning-glories (*Ipomoea* spp.), which most butterflies avoid.

**COMMENTS:** This is one of our most striking butterflies, and it is one of the few skippers that would catch the attention of the layman. The species seems to have been quite numerous in NC in 1994, 1995, and 1998. In fact, I had some daily counts of 100+ at Holly Shelter Game Land in October 1995. However, numbers were much reduced in the state in fall 1996; numbers rebounded somewhat in 1997, but not back to 1995 levels. The year 2001 was another very poor year, with just two reports for the entire Piedmont. Numbers in 2002 and 2003 were somewhat "normal", with the all-time state count set in 2003, on the rather late date of November 2. Numbers have been low since 2003 and in most years since then; the peak daily counts were all between 1995 and 2003. On the other hand, 2012 was a banner year, with a whopping 137 reports across the state, probably the most in over 20 years. Sadly, only nine records were made in 2013, all in the Coastal Plain! The flights rebounded somewhat from 2014-2016, though there were only roughly 25 reports statewide in each of these years. In 2019, a fairly good flight was noted, with 72 reports; but with only 171 individuals in total, there were few if any concentrations of the skippers. In 2020, there was an excellent flight into the state, with at least 7 new county records, and nearly 200 records across the state! Three more county records were added in 2021, with 77 reports across the state, a moderate year for it. An additional three counties were added in 2022, but the flight that year was otherwise rather light to moderate. Four new county records were made in 2023, a moderate season with 109 records added. There were 128 records in 2024.