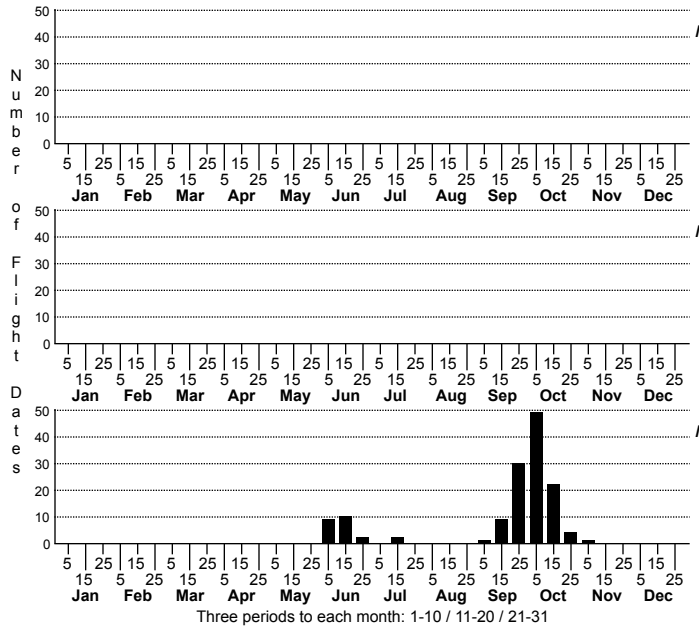
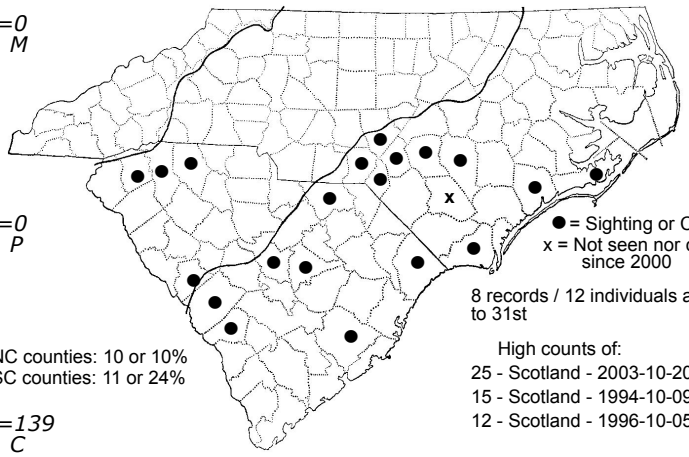
Meske's Skipper *Hesperia meskei*





NC counties: 10 or 10%
SC counties: 11 or 24%

8 records / 12 individuals added to 31st

High counts of:
25 - Scotland - 2003-10-20
15 - Scotland - 1994-10-09
12 - Scotland - 1996-10-05

Earliest date: Scotland 2 Jun 2024
Latest date: Moore; C 1 Nov 1999

Status and Rank

State	Global
SR - S3	G3G4

DISTRIBUTION: The southern Coastal Plain, mainly in the Sandhills, but a 2018 record extended the range east to Carteret County. Because the species occurs well into the Piedmont of GA, as well as in northwestern SC, it may occur in the extreme southern Piedmont of NC. NC lies at the northern edge of the species' range.

ABUNDANCE: Apparently declining in the past few years, but not in as dire condition as several other Hesperia species in the state (i.e., Leonard's and Cobweb). In the Sandhills, it is uncommon, but formerly was locally fairly common in October. Very rare elsewhere in the southern Coastal Plain, where the only county records are Bladen, Brunswick, Sampson, Onslow, and Carteret. The 2008 records of three individuals at two sites in Brunswick County by Jeff Pippen and Ricky Davis, plus one in 2018 in Carteret County by Matt Beatty, give hope that other populations exist in coastal counties. For whatever reason, it was hard to find in known Sandhills locations in 2021, with just three reports of single individuals.

FLIGHT PERIOD: There are two broods, but the species is scarce in the first brood. Broods occur from early June to late June (and possibly to mid-July), and from the latter half of September through October. Often difficult to find in the state until late in September.

HABITAT: As with the Dotted Skipper, the Meske's Skipper in NC is associated with drier Longleaf Pine (Pinus palustris) habitats. In NC, it is found in fairly typical, Longleaf Pine/scrub oak woodlands with an abundance of pink or purple flowers, particularly Sandywoods Chaffhead (Carphephorus bellidifolius). It seems to be absent in the moister Longleaf Pine habitats such as flatwoods and savannas. It is less likely to occur in full sun (fields) than is the Dotted Skipper, but as with all skippers, Meske's prefers sunlit places, such as openings within the pine lands and along sandy roads through the forests.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are native grasses; Derb Carter and I saw two females ovipositing on Little Bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium). The species favors pink or purple flowers in October; nearly all I have observed nectared on Carphephorus bellidifolius or Liatris spp.

COMMENTS: To find the Meske's in NC, one should visit open upland Longleaf Pine forests where there is an abundance of pink or purple flowers in bloom. I found 19 Meske's Skippers, at many sites in Scotland and Moore counties, on October 9, 1994; and I was surprised to count 25 individuals, mostly females, on the rather late date of October 20, 2003. Despite considerable field work in the Sandhills in late May and June, I have seen the species only several times during the first flight period. Now that conclusive photos have been attained for the species in Carteret County, for the first brood, a specimen reportedly collected in this county in 2013 is likely correctly identified; however, the date and condition (worn) of the specimen were seemingly too early in the second brood. At any rate, relatively little butterfly field work has taken place in Longleaf Pine stands in coastal counties in June (first brood); most butterfly field work in such places occurs in April and early May, and again from August into October.