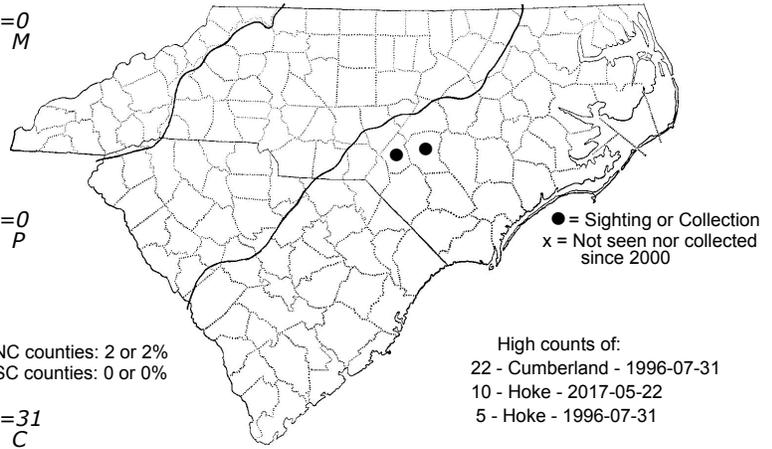
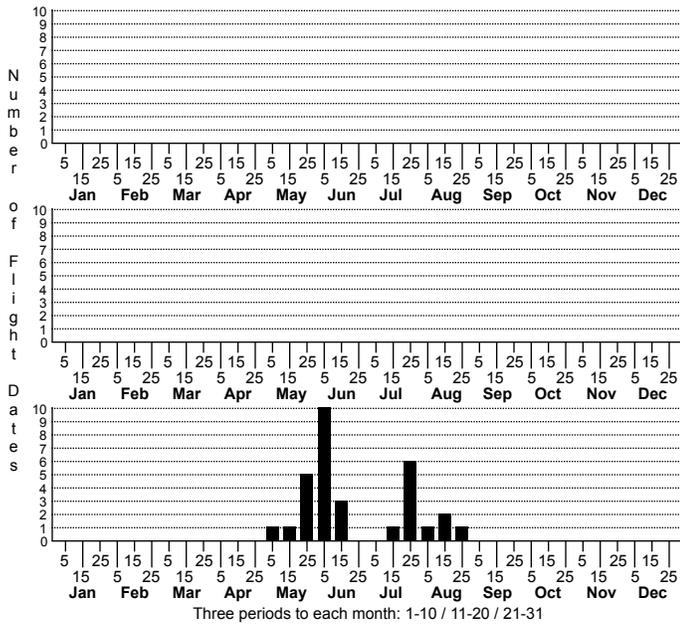


Mitchell's Satyr *Neonympha mitchellii*



Earliest date: Cumberland 5 May ?
 Latest date: Cumberland 21 Aug 1984

Status and Rank	
State	Global
SR - S1	E - G2

Other Name: Our subspecies [francisci] is called the St. Francis' Satyr.

DISTRIBUTION: Restricted in NC to a small area of the Sandhills, so far found only in Cumberland and Hoke counties. This area was, at the time of discovery in the early 1980's, a far southerly disjunction from the main range -- NJ (formerly) west to MI and IN. In fact, this NC population is considered to be a disjunct subspecies, called "St. Francis' Satyr" (*Neonympha mitchellii francisci*). In the past two to three decades, the species has also been conclusively found in southwestern VA, AL, and MS.

ABUNDANCE: Rare in its tiny range. This is one of the rarest butterfly species in the Eastern United States, with the NC population first discovered only in the early and mid-1980's. Unfortunately, most or all areas where records are known are now off-limits to visitors owing to national security and to liability concerns; thus, new records have been scarce to absent in recent years, and likely will be also in the near future. Sadly, the few people who have been given access in the last few years have found very few individuals, and the population might not be far from extirpation in NC.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Two broods in NC; late May (very rarely from early May) to mid-June, and mid- or late July to late August.

HABITAT: This species is extremely habitat restricted. In NC, it is found mainly at old beaver ponds that have grown up to a dense sedge meadow/bog. It is also found in bomb craters that have much sedge. It typically is found in semi-shaded places, but these semi-shaded places are probably inferior habitat compared with open "sedgy" areas (which are extremely rare), the favored habitat by the species in the primary portion of the range (OH to southern MI).

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are sedges, believed to be Mitchell's Sedge (*Carex mitchelliana*) in NC, but other sedges might be used (based on a study by Steve Hall). It feeds like other satyrs on carrion, fruit, sap, etc. NOTE: The plant and the animal are named after two different men named Mitchell, but this is a nice coincidence!

COMMENTS: This species is so rare in its range that it has been devastated by habitat loss and by over-collection. Even though it is Federally Endangered, including the NC subspecies, unscrupulous collecting is, possibly, still a problem. Because of potential collecting pressure, even in NC, exact locations must be kept as secret as possible. Like the Georgia Satyr, it is a very slow flier that is easily netted. Another threat is that its "sedgy" habitat, which is quite transitory, can become overgrown with shrubs and trees unless fire, continued beaver activity, or cutting of shrubs and saplings by man's intervention keeps woody vegetation retarded.

Because of the recent findings of the species in VA, AL, and MS, there is a chance the species might be found in western NC some day, in grassy, open to partly-shaded wetlands, such as wet meadows (including damp cow pastures). There has been much searching for the species around margins of beaver ponds and other marshy places at man-made lakes and ponds in the Sandhills region outside of Fort Bragg, such as at Sandhills Game Land; so far, despite seemingly suitable habitats, the butterfly has yet to be found there.