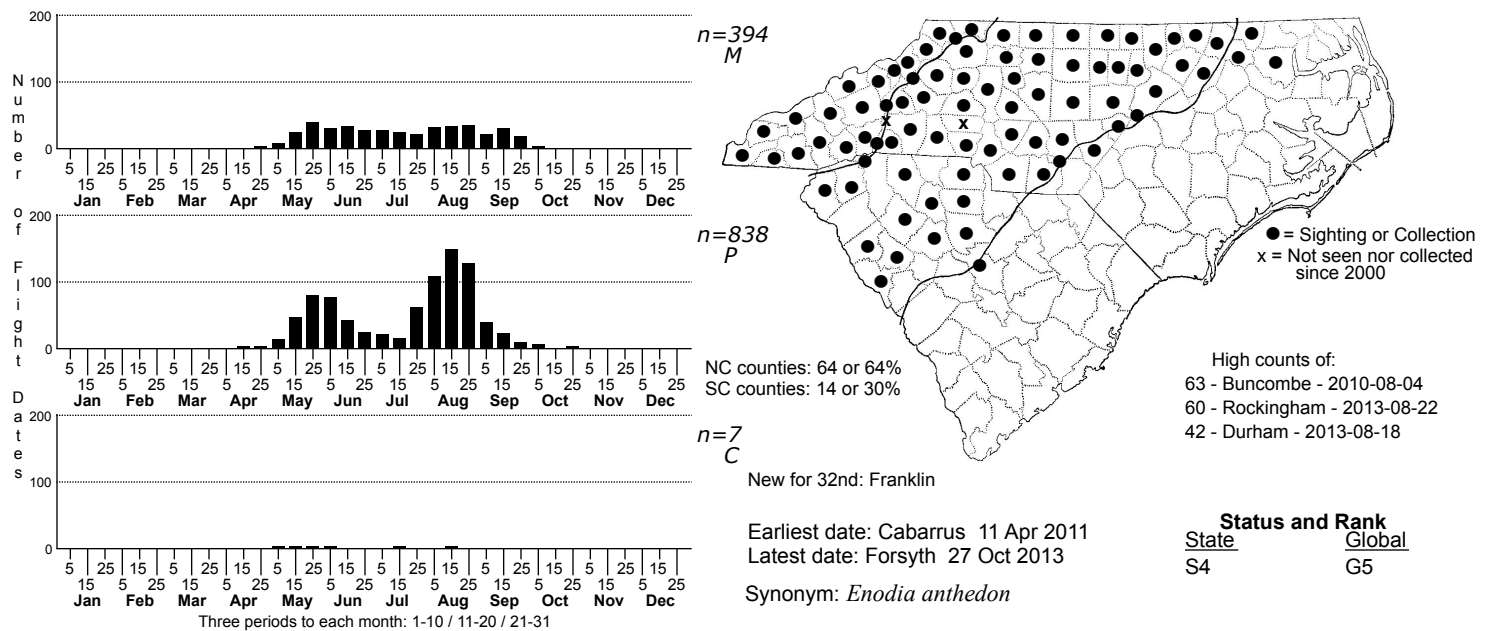


## Northern Pearly-eye *Lethe anthedon*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the Mountains and Piedmont. Occurs in the Coastal Plain along the Roanoke River, but not known from elsewhere in the province.

**ABUNDANCE:** Generally fairly common (at least locally) in the Mountains, and uncommon to locally fairly common in most of the Piedmont; ranges to well over 4000 feet in elevation. Presumably less numerous in southeastern Piedmont counties, and rare along the Roanoke River. The species is spreading eastward in the state, both in range and abundance; of the counties outside of the Coastal Plain, only Franklin now lacks a record.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods (and possibly a rudimentary third brood in warm autumns). Broods occur in the Mountains and Piedmont from early or mid-May to around mid-July, and from mid-July to early October. More data needed to be certain if there really is a third brood.

**HABITAT:** In the Mountains, it is found in rich to mesic hardwood forests, usually near a stream or seepage. To be looked for along trails or other openings in moist montane woods, especially on dirt roads through hardwood forests. In the Piedmont, seen in various moist to mesic hardwood forests, usually along dirt roads and wide trails through forests. The Coastal Plain sites are openings in moist hardwood forests next to the Roanoke River.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Woodland species of grasses with broad leaves are foodplants; cane (*Arundinaria* spp.) is likely not a foodplant. The introduced, weedy exotic Japanese Stilt-grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is a known food plant in NC. Food of adults is like that of the Southern Pearly-eye; does not nectar, but gets nutrients from mud, wet soil, dung, sap, etc.

**COMMENTS:** With the great spread of *Microstegium vimineum* across bottomlands in NC, we are seeing a corresponding increase in the Northern Pearly-eye, at least in the Piedmont. Because this exotic plant also occurs in the Coastal Plain, it was not a complete surprise for a Coastal Plain record in 2006. Additional Coastal Plain records can be expected in upcoming years, away from the Roanoke River floodplain.

Adults readily perch on dirt roads to allow close observation. They look very similar to Southern Pearly-eyes, but they average slightly smaller and brighter-colored than the latter species, with less white frosting beneath. However, the only conclusive field mark is apparently the black antennal club, generally with an orange tip. (Southern has an all-orange club.) Jeff Pippen discovered an apparently "new" field mark in 2020 by carefully examining photos of both species, and this has been corroborated by others checking their photos and locations. On both species, check the white "pupil" mark inside the hind wing eyespots below; Northerns have all of these as distinctly round "dots", whereas Southerns almost always have at least one (if not more) of these white pupils as lines or bars and not clear rounded "dots".