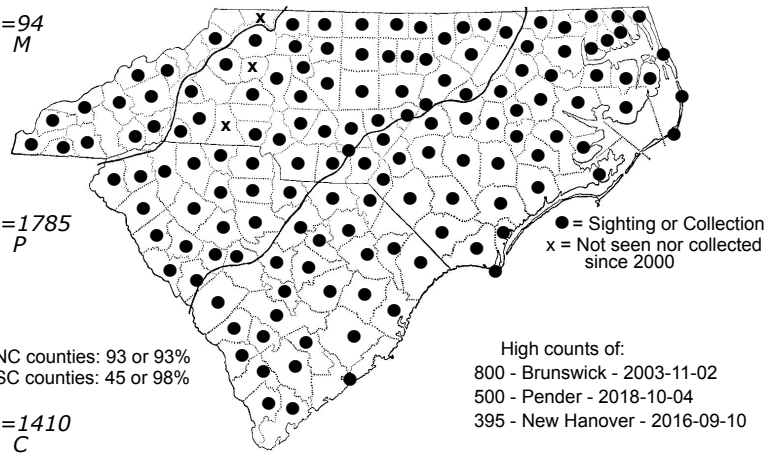
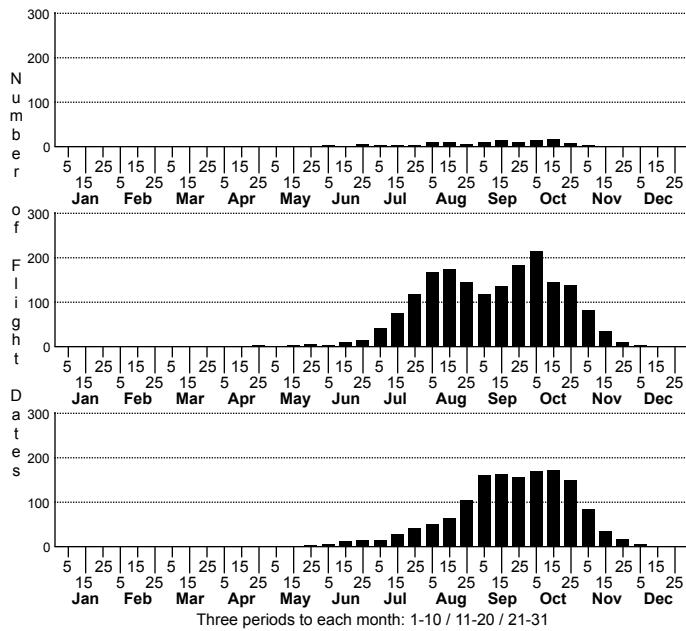


Ocola Skipper *Panoquina ocola*



Earliest date: Guilford 26 Apr 2009
Latest date: Durham 7 Dec 2015

Status and Rank
State: S5
Global: G5

Other Name: Long-winged Skipper

DISTRIBUTION: Throughout the Coastal Plain and Piedmont, and the southern half of the Mountains; but only two county records for the northern Mountains, and perhaps absent from a few of them. It may be simply a visitor to most Mountain and upper Piedmont counties, as the species is quite migratory.

ABUNDANCE: Seemingly increasing in recent years in NC and the Eastern U.S. Very erratic in time and place, as it is partly migratory. Along or near the southern coast, it may be common to abundant in fall. Elsewhere in the Coastal Plain and eastern and southern Piedmont, it averages fairly common, but may be quite uncommon in some years and occasionally common in others, in late summer and fall. Rare to uncommon and sporadic farther west in the Piedmont, but rare (to occasionally uncommon) in the southern Mountains; very rare at best in the northern Mountains.

FLIGHT PERIOD: The flight period is essentially a single one (presumably composed of two broods) from midsummer through the fall, mainly from mid-July to late August, and late August to mid-November, rarely to early December. Peak numbers occur in October. There is a tiny brood in the Coastal Plain and eastern Piedmont in late May and June. Many of the individuals in the late summer and fall are clearly migrants from farther south, and individuals can be seen flying northward across open water along the coast at that time of year.

HABITAT: As with nearly all Southern migrants, Ocolas are not particularly choosy in habitat, but will occur wherever nectar plants are abundant. Near the coast they can occur around dunes, maritime shrub thickets, vacant lots, roadsides, fields, savannas, gardens, etc. Farther inland, they can be found in powerline clearings, weedy fields, gardens, and other places with an abundance of flowers. Some references indicate a preference for damp places; they do tend to be scarce in overly dry sites such as dry pine/oak sandhills and scrubby habitats, and prefer damp to mesic sites.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Grasses are the main foodplants. The species nectars frequently; common nectar flowers are Dune Camphorweed (*Heterotheca subaxillaris*), Groundsel-tree (*Baccharis halimifolia*), Vanilla-leaf (*Trilisa odoratissima*), and others. I have seen dozens nectaring on mountain-mints (*Pycnanthemum* spp.) in Umstead State Park. Most of the 150 that Jeff Phippen and I saw in September 2002, and the 800 I saw in November 2003, were nectaring on Lantana (*Lantana strigocamara*) in yards and gardens near the coast.

COMMENTS: This species can occur in swarms! It is unpredictable from year to year, and from site to site. It is near the coast where numbers can truly be impressive, especially in October, when it is possible to find over 50 in a few hours. I found over 100 a day in savannas at Holly Shelter Game Land in fall 1995; however, 1996, 2000, and 2001 were rather poor flight years for most migrant species, including the Ocola Skipper. The species had a boom year in 2003, and again in 2014 (100 records for the Piedmont alone and an excellent 67 records for the less well-worked Coastal Plain). Other boom years were in 2015, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, and 2023. Two of the three largest one-day counts have been in 2016 and 2018, by single observers or a pair of observers, as opposed to a large party or group of parties. It does seem to be more reliably common to abundant in the state than during the latter part of the 20th Century; however, as the species is somewhat migratory, "down years" are certainly expected in upcoming seasons.