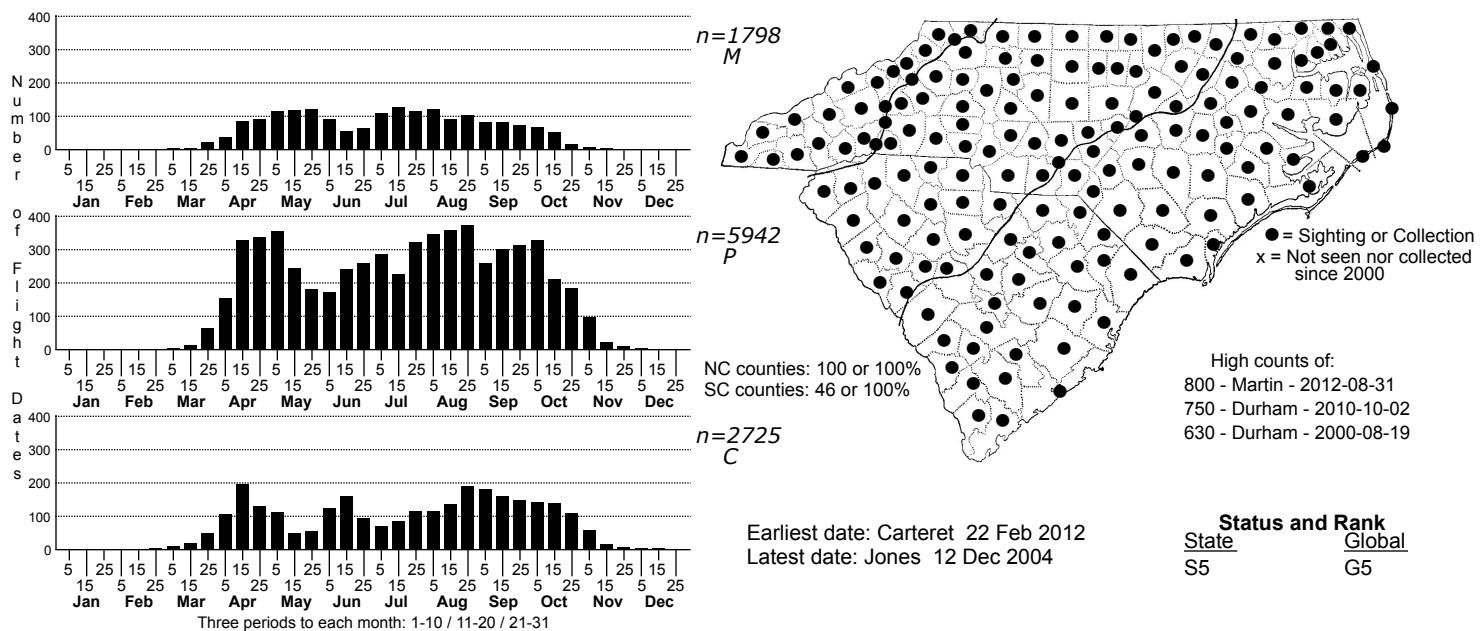


Pearl Crescent *Phyciodes tharos*



DISTRIBUTION: Statewide; occurs in all 100 counties, ranging from the higher Mountains to the immediate coast.

ABUNDANCE: Very common statewide; one of the most widespread and often seen butterflies. Appears to be equally numerous in the Mountains as in other provinces. It is more numerous in late summer and fall than it is in April and May.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Many broods (four or five) that essentially overlap; there is a continuous presence in NC from mid-March to late November. In the Mountains, the species is rarely found into November, and it is also scarce in March.

HABITAT: Extremely widespread in most any sunny locations -- fields, wooded borders, yards, etc. Not associated with interior forested areas, but certainly one of the more frequently seen butterflies along woodland edges and powerline clearings.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are essentially asters (mainly in the genus *Symphytum*). Ironically, because it is such a widespread species, the butterfly observer would never suspect what plants are the foodplants! Nectar plants are very widespread, but they are usually low-growing herbs, as opposed to tall herbs or large shrubs.

COMMENTS: Observers should learn this species well, especially the various forms of it; the underparts are quite varied in coloration and pattern. Five other similar-looking species (Phaon, Tawny, and Incognito crescents, and Silvery and Gorgone checkerspots) occur in the state and can be confused with the Pearl Crescent. This is particularly true in the Mountains, where all of the above except Phaon Crescent are found.

There are a few color forms/types of Pearl Crescent, and a few such "forms" (not including the Incognito Crescent) have been mentioned in the literature as potential splits from this widespread and abundant species. [NOTE: The Incognito Crescent (*P. incognitus*) was actually recently split off from the Northern Crescent (*P. cocyta*), and not from the Pearl Crescent; the Northern Crescent occurs from VA northward.] It would come as little surprise if what we still know as the Pearl Crescent (in NC or in the Eastern States) is actually composed of more than just one species.