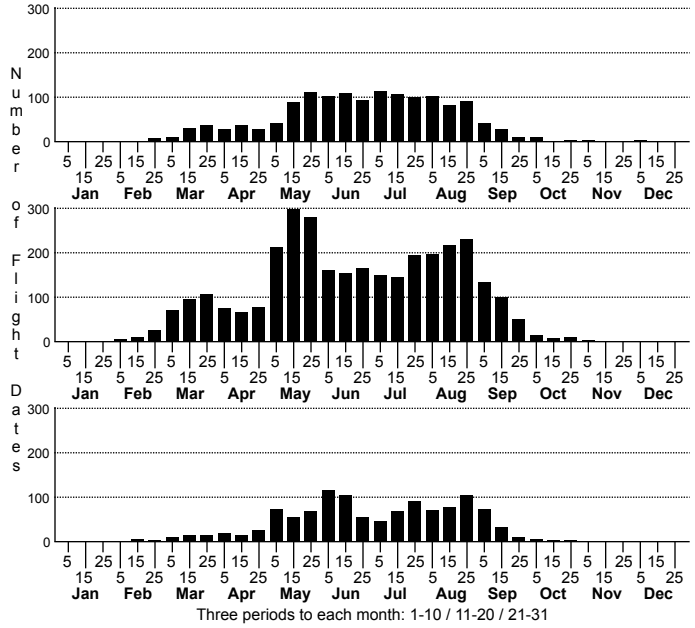
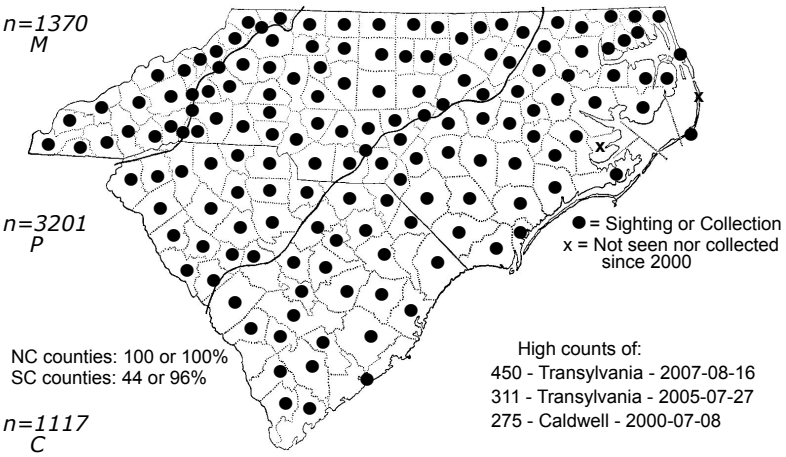
# **Summer Azure** *Celastrina neglecta*




NC counties: 100 or 100%
SC counties: 44 or 96%

High counts of:
450 - Transylvania - 2007-08-16
311 - Transylvania - 2005-07-27
275 - Caldwell - 2000-07-08

New for 33rd: Chowan, Dare; OBL

Earliest date: Mecklenburg 7 Feb 2023
Latest date: Yancey 4 Dec 2001

Synonym: *Celastrina ladon (complex)*
Other Name: Spring Azure

**Status and Rank**

| State | Global |
|---|---|
| S5 | G5 |

DISTRIBUTION: Statewide; found in all 100 counties.

ABUNDANCE: Common to abundant in the Mountains; less numerous, but certainly common, downstate. Much more numerous in NC than the Spring Azure, though presumably outnumbered by the Holly Azure in the spring season in parts of the Coastal Plain. Abundance in early to mid-spring needs further elucidation, but seemingly reasonably common in spring. Formerly believed to be scarce in the "spring" brood, but such is not the case (at least now), and many records previously considered in the past as Spring Azure are probably better assigned to Summer Azure based on review of photographs.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Three to possibly four broods. Recent evidence (Pavulaan, pers. comm.) has shown there to be an early spring brood, of unknown flight spread and abundance, in NC. The first flight is from mid-February into late April or early May, generally starting a week or two before the first brood of Spring Azure. The main broods occur after the single brood of Spring Azure and Holly Azure have peaked and are in decline, such that when fresh Summer Azures appear in late spring, the other two have individuals that should be somewhat worn. The main flights in the Coastal Plain occur between late April and mid-September, and in the Piedmont between early May and late September. In the Mountains, the main flights occur from early or mid-May to late September. Two broods occur within these flight dates.

HABITAT: This species is very widespread, and it is found in wooded areas and in wood margins, especially in and near deciduous forests. It often occurs in more open areas than the other azure species. However, in the Coastal Plain, it typically does not occur in numbers in forests dominated by broadleaf evergreens, such as pocosins and bay forests, at least not in the first brood.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The Summer Azure has a very wide array of foodplants, both woody species and herbs. The woody species are apparently only deciduous ones such as Black Cherry (Prunus serotina), other members of the rose (Rosaceae) family, and various dogwoods (Cornus spp.). As with other azures, the species has a wide array of nectar plants. They also gather moisture and minerals at mud puddles and wet soil.

COMMENTS: This taxon was first described by Edwards in the 19th Century, but as of the late 20th Century it was still submerged in the Spring Azure complex. There is a growing consensus that Celastrina neglecta is a valid species; however, the NABA Checklist (2001) keeps Summer Azure as a subspecies of the C. ladon complex, opting to be conservative. We follow NatureServe, the Butterflies of America website (2020), and Pelham (2023) by treating this as a valid species.

The males are a sky blue above on the fore wings, with thin white veins (that are absent on Spring Azure); the hind wings are whitish to very pale gray, lighter than on the Spring Azure, though about the same color below as in Holly and Appalachian azures. Male Spring Azures are a richer blue above and lack the white veins. Female Summer Azures show much white scaling on both wings above. Below, the ground color is whitish to very pale gray, as is seen on the males.

This is the only azure that is flying downstate after early May. However, in the Mountains the Appalachian Azure is on the wing from late April into June and early July, so great care must be taken there to distinguish the Summer Azure from that larger species. The first large brood of the Summer Azure typically emerges in the Mountains a week after Appalachians emerge; thus, one should not find individuals of the same sex of both species, with the same scale wear, at the same time. As the species does occur during the early spring season, one cannot assume an azure seen from February into April to be a Spring Azure (which is definitely declining in the state) or a Holly Azure. See the Holly Azure account for more information about separating it from the Summer Azure.