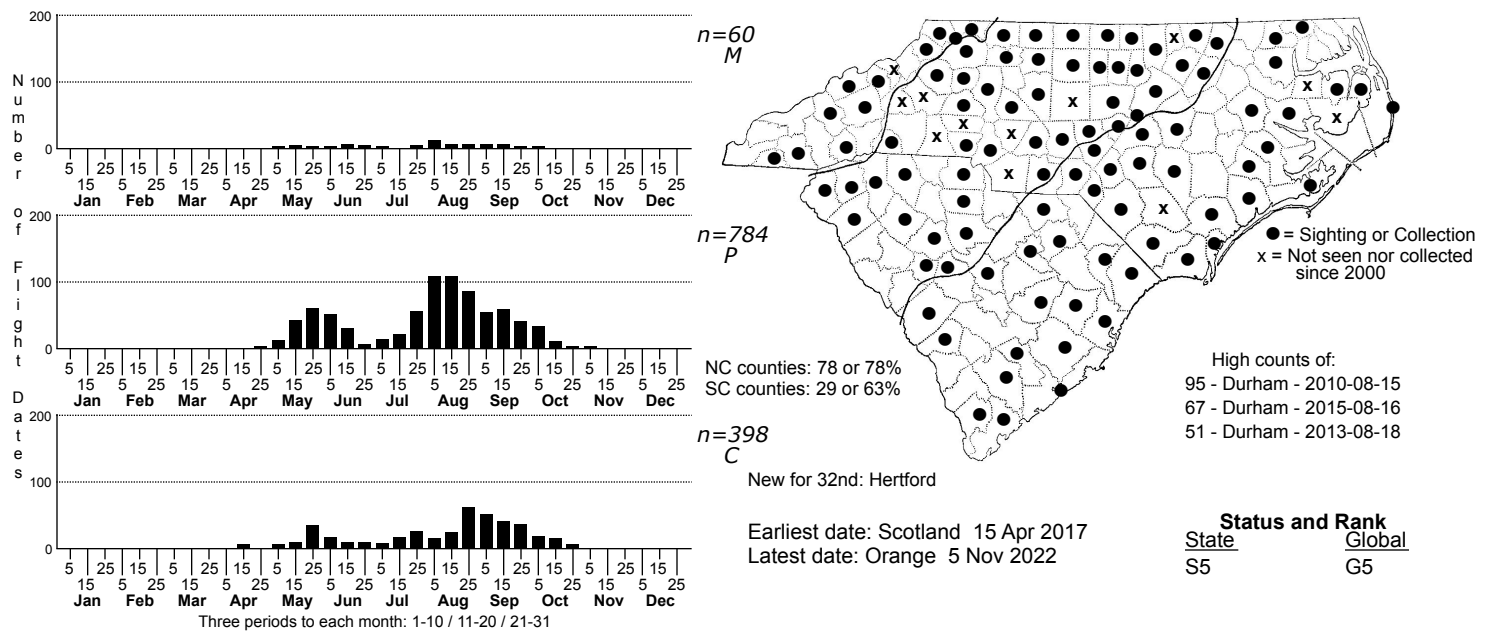


**Swarthy Skipper** *Nastra lherminier*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Essentially statewide, but not widespread in the Mountains or the northeastern Coastal Plain; might occur in all counties, but more widespread downstate. Records for just two of the six southwestern Mountain counties, and also just a few county records for the northeastern Coastal Plain. Might be absent in a few northeastern Coastal Plain counties, but there has been a relative lack of field work in this part of the state. The lack of records for the west-central Coastal Plain is due to scarcity of field work there.

**ABUNDANCE:** Declining somewhat in the last decade, as have most skippers using native grass species as foodplants. Fairly common in at least parts of the Coastal Plain (at least in the southern half) and in the eastern and southern Piedmont; sometimes common in savannas in the lower Coastal Plain. Uncommon in the upper Piedmont, locally uncommon in the Mountains, and rare in the northern Coastal Plain. Certainly, it is more numerous in the eastern half of NC than in the western half, even though this is not obvious from the range map.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two fairly long broods; early May to mid- or late June, and early or mid-July to late October. More data needed for the Mountains, but two broods there also; apparently from early or mid-May into early July, and from late July through September.

**HABITAT:** Widespread and not particularly choosy in habitat, though usually where moderately thick to dense native grass/herb cover is present. Habitats include savannas, overgrown fields, powerline clearings, woodland borders, glades, and edges of marshes. It is not generally thought of as a wetland species, but it does occur (as indicated above) along marsh edges and savannas. It avoids pastures and other places dominated by non-native grasses.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium* [*Andropogon*] *scoparius*) is the most common foodplant, if not the only host. The species has a wide array of nectar plants; most are low growing herbs, with flowers within a foot of the ground.

COMMENTS: The Swarthy Skipper is one of the plainest-looking skippers and is easily overlooked and misidentified; it quickly drops from flowers into grassy cover when clouds block the sun. It is a widespread species, but is seldom really numerous anywhere, and owing to its small size it is easily overlooked unless perched on a large flower or a flower more than a foot off the ground. But, because of its many habitats, it is a numerous species in NC. More field work is needed in the Mountains and northern Coastal Plain to determine its true abundance there.