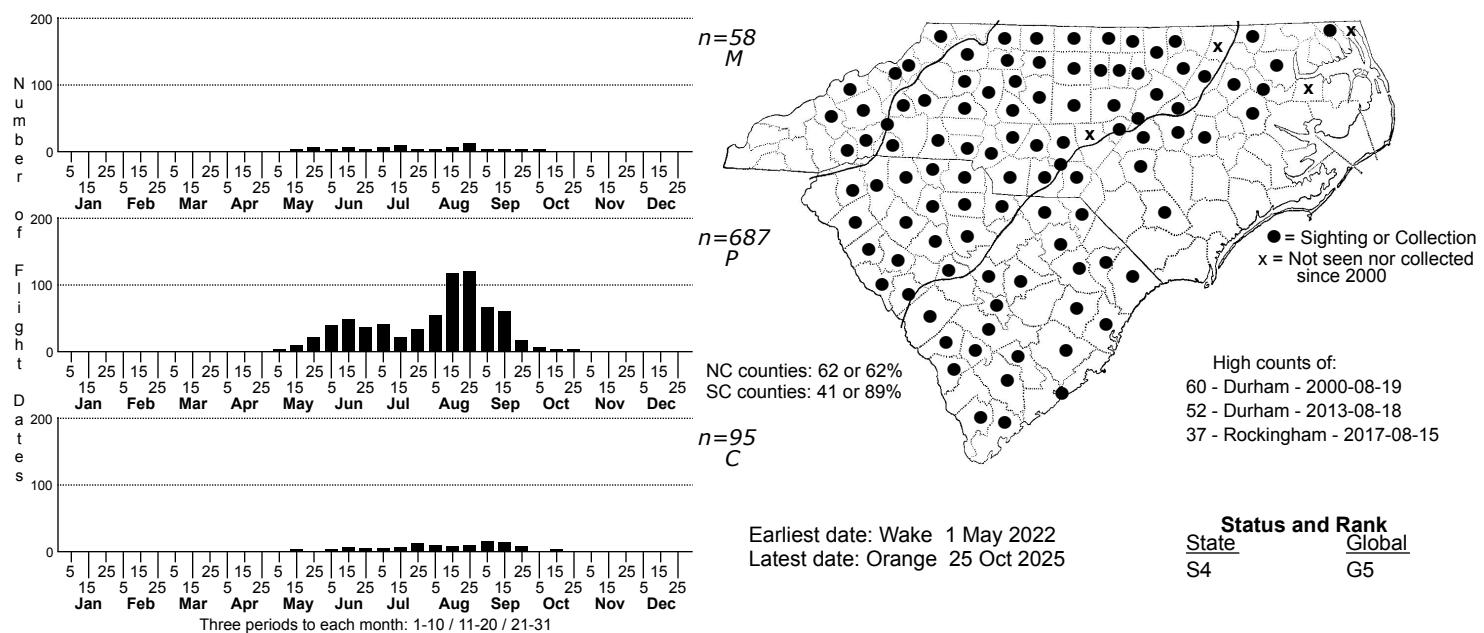


## Tawny Emperor *Asterocampa clyton*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the Piedmont; scattered in the upper Coastal Plain, mostly along brownwater rivers. Also in the northeastern Coastal Plain away from brownwater rivers. There are only eight known county records for the Mountains, where it occurs sparingly at low elevations. Ought to occur along the Neuse River farther eastward into the central Coastal Plain; no records along this river in Lenoir or Craven counties, as yet.

**ABUNDANCE:** Generally uncommon in the central and eastern Piedmont; rather rare in the upper Piedmont and in the upper Coastal Plain. Very rare to rare and poorly known in the Mountains, and very rare to absent in the lower Coastal Plain. At nearly all places where it occurs, it is outnumbered by the Hackberry Emperor by about 3:1 to 5:1. However, in some places in the Coastal Plain, and perhaps in the Mountains, the Tawny can actually outnumber the Hackberry (fide Salman Abdulali, based on his Pitt County data); in fact, there are almost as many total records of Tawny Emperor in the Coastal Plain (94 as of 2024) as there are of Hackberry Emperor (110 as of 2024). For some unknown reason, the species was surprisingly scarce in 2021, with only 13 records of just 15 individuals for the entire state.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods downstate; generally mid-May to mid-July, and late July to late September, rarely mid-October. Presumably two broods in the Mountains because of the wide spread of dates, though it could be a stray or migrant to some higher elevation areas. Its flight period in spring is one to two weeks later than that of the Hackberry Emperor.

**HABITAT:** Almost identical to that of the Hackberry Emperor, and the two are often seen together, even landing on an observer at the same time! Habitats include bottomlands, especially along dirt or paved roads, upland forests over mafic rock, and openings and edges of such forests, as long as species of hackberries (*Celtis* spp.) are present.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** Identical to those of the Hackberry Emperor -- must have *Celtis* species for its foodplant.

**COMMENTS:** Except for it being noticeably less numerous than the Hackberry Emperor, the Tawny Emperor's habits, habitats, and behavior are identical to the former. Usually when and where I see a Tawny Emperor, I will see one to five Hackberry Emperors. I have had good success in finding these species at sunny spots along dirt roads through bottomlands. On hot days, when you are sweating, keep an eye out for these species landing on you.

As with the Hackberry Emperor, this species is much more widespread in the SC Coastal Plain than in the NC Coastal Plain. This discrepancy is due to the much wider range of Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) in SC. Both emperors in the NC Coastal Plain are seldom found away from brownwater floodplain forests.