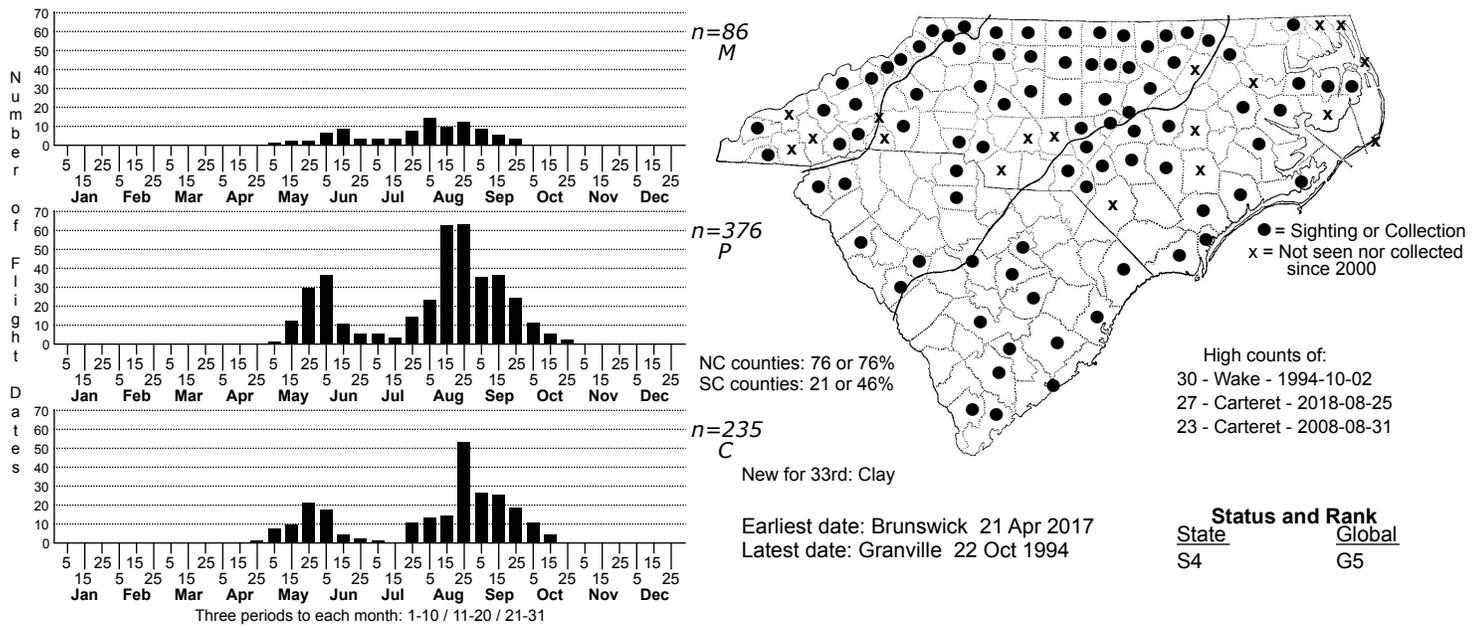


## Tawny-edged Skipper *Polites themistocles*



**DISTRIBUTION:** Essentially statewide, but with many counties lacking records. It is present on the Outer Banks (at least formerly).

**ABUNDANCE:** Declining in recent years, as are many skippers using native grasses. Uncommon but widespread across the state; locally numerous in a few savannas and other dense, diverse grasslands with many flowers. Somewhat more numerous in the eastern half of the state than in the western half, but rare in many areas of the state now, with many counties still lacking records in each province (an obvious sign of butterfly scarcity but also of field work scarcity). This species is not nearly as common in NC as one would surmise by reading field guides, because of the "Northern" bias of most guides.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods; downstate it is present from early May to early July, and mid- or late July to mid-October. In the Mountains, it is found from early or mid-May to late September.

**HABITAT:** The species is found in old fields, woodland borders, powerline clearings, savannas, and other places with abundant and usually thick native grass cover. It is more numerous in slightly damp grasslands (such as savannas) than in truly dry places, but it is not a marsh skipper. Like many other grass skippers, it tends to avoid places dominated by exotic grasses, such as pastures, abandoned cultivated fields, and gardens.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplants are native grasses, particularly panicgrasses (*Coleataenia* spp.). The species nectars on a wide variety of flowers, with no particular groups dominating --unlike the preference for Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) by the Peck's Skipper.

**COMMENTS:** Both the Peck's Skipper and the Tawny-edged Skipper are considered by references to be among the most abundant skippers in the Northeastern states. However, neither is all that common in NC. I have seen Tawny-edged more frequently in rich grass/forb places such as savannas than elsewhere. It is outnumbered in NC by the very similar Crossline Skipper, especially in the drier grassy areas. Because of the similar appearance of Tawny-edged and Crossline skippers -- even photos of the two can be very difficult to differentiate -- abundance and distribution of both species need further clarification. And, I suspect that a moderate number of reports of "Tawny-edged" refer to the much more common Crossline; fortunately, Tawny-edged does occur statewide, so errors of accepting incorrect reports do not affect range maps but can affect flight charts and details of abundance.