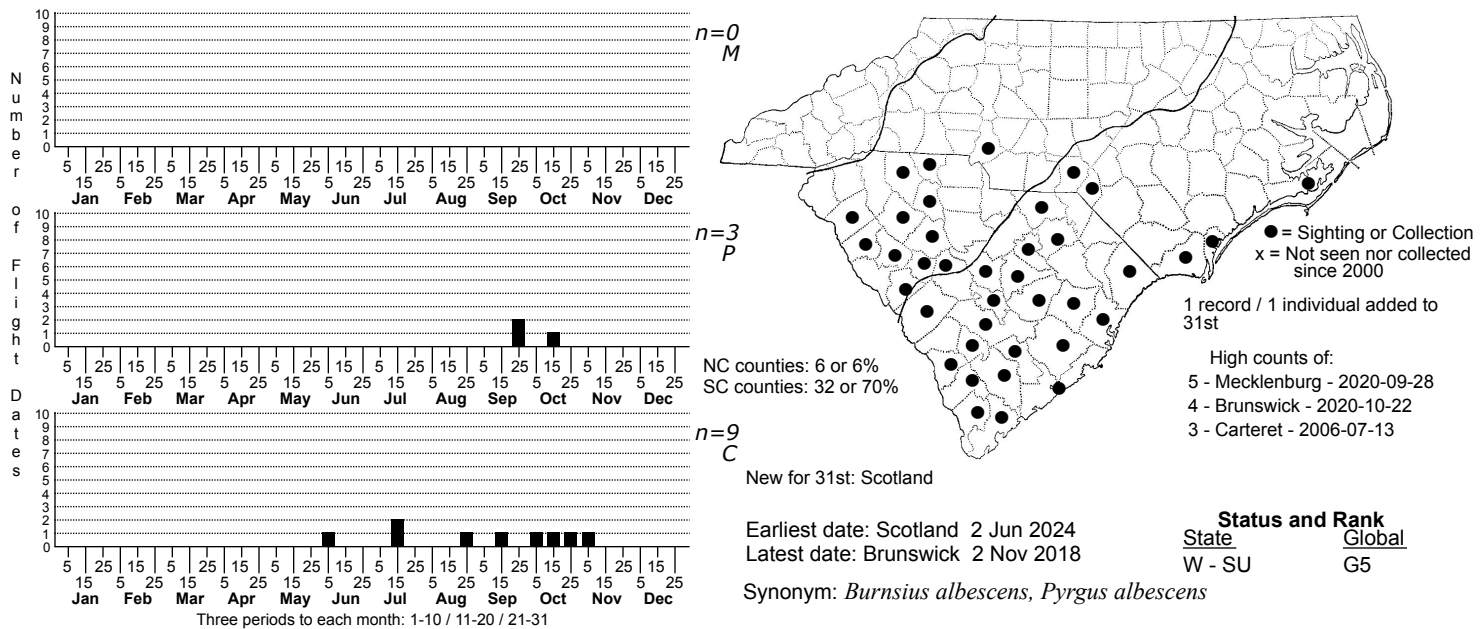


# White Checkered-Skipper *Burnsius albezens*



**DISTRIBUTION:** A recent arrival from our south, and likely a resident species now. It is possible that it is simply a stray/visitor, with no breeding populations. Specimens are now known from Brunswick (2018), Mecklenburg (2018), and Carteret (2006) counties, and recent sight reports from Brunswick (2013), Richmond (2016), and New Hanover (2020) counties. This species ranges across the southern quarter of the United States, from CA east to FL. It has been rapidly spreading northward and now is known across most of SC, except for the Mountains. It has also been collected (in 2010) in northern VA.

**ABUNDANCE:** Not known, but certainly increasing. As the only known way to separate the species from the Common Checkered-Skipper is by dissection of the male genitalia, any picture of the abundance (and range) will be slow in coming, unless there is more collection and examination of male specimens. Currently, seemingly very rare or rare in the southeastern and extreme southern parts of the state.

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Probably summer and fall. The only dates available are from July 13 to November 2. However, if it is a breeding resident, it might first emerge in spring (as does the Common Checkered-Skipper).

**HABITAT:** The Carteret record (of a male, and perhaps a female) came from sandy lawns/grassy areas immediately along the coast. The sight report from Brunswick County came from a sandy area within a pine flatwoods, also very near the coast; the sight report from Richmond County came from a sandy roadside not far from the SC border. The collection from Brunswick County came from a vacant, weedy field, only a few miles away from the Brunswick sight report; and specimens from Mecklenburg County came from a restored "prairie". The species likely occurs in sandier or drier habitats than for Common Checkered-Skipper, which is mainly found in NC around mesic disturbed places such as cultivated field margins, waste lots, lawns, and gardens. These habitat differences are speculation, especially as Whites occur in desert habitats where Commons are rare to absent.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplants are mallows (Malvaceae), chiefly or solely *Sida* species in the Southeast. It likely nectars on flowers growing close to the ground, as does the Common Checkered-Skipper.

**COMMENTS:** The three specimens have been collected by Randy Newman at Fort Macon State Park, by Derb Carter near the SC line in Brunswick County, and by Rob Gilson in Mecklenburg County; Steve Hall dissected the first two, and determined by the valve of the genitalia (male) that each of the three is a White Checkered-Skipper. Harry Pavulaan collected the species in northern VA in October 2010. However, it is possible that the individual collected in VA was a stray, or visitor from the West or Southwest. One should not assume that the "vanguard" of the species has "marched" all the way through NC and north to southern VA -- several males collected north of Durham in October 2012 were clearly Commons (by dissection), as were other checkered-skipper collected by Pavulaan recently in northern VA. However, one wonders if White Checkered-Skipper have moved farther north well beyond Mecklenburg County by now; judicious collection and dissection of males in the central and northern portions of NC are welcome and warranted.

This skipper is considered a good/separate species from Common Checkered-Skipper by many authorities, such as the Butterflies of America website and Pelham (2023). The male genitalia of White Checkered-Skipper has a rounded valve with a single tiny tooth, as opposed to a "clawlike" valve with two prongs, somewhat resembling the claw of a crab or crayfish, in Common. See the Common Checkered-Skipper account for some suggested field marks to separate these two species. The Common is being "pushed northward" or is being eliminated by the White in FL, GA, and SC, such that the majority of those collected now in most of SC are Whites. The scientific name of "albezens" was proposed in 2022 as the name instead of "albescens", as the latter name is now applied to a Central American taxon; we now follow Pelham (2023) in using the name of *Burnsius albezens*.