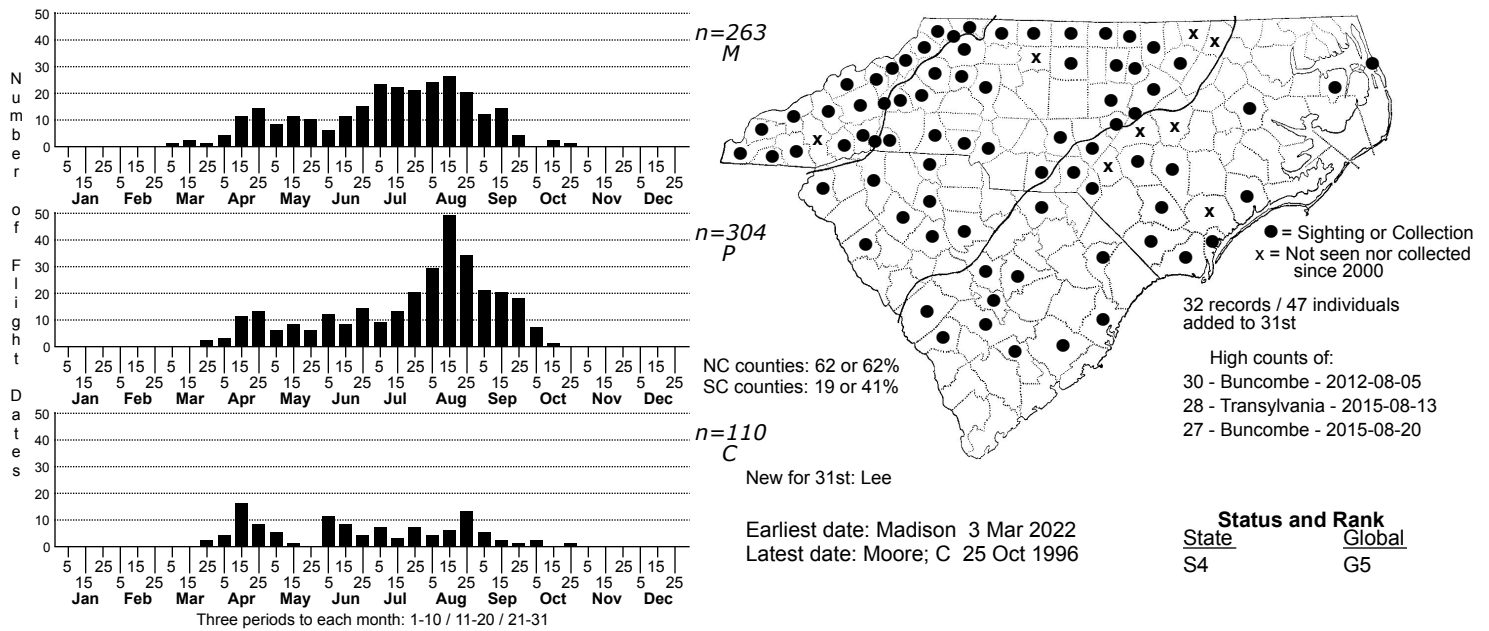


Wild Indigo Duskywing *Erynnis baptisiae*



DISTRIBUTION: Somewhat spotty range in NC, but it has a rather "bimodal" distribution. Though found across the western 3/4th of the state, it is more widespread in the Mountains and the Sandhills than in the Piedmont. Apparently absent from most of the northern two-thirds of the Coastal Plain, though there is a recent confirmed photograph for Pitt County, a sight report for Tyrrell County, and even a photo record for northern Dare County (Outer Banks), expanding the range to the east. However, these latter three county records might represent stray individuals, as there is some question whether suitable foodplants occur locally.

ABUNDANCE: In general, uncommon over most of the state. Uncommon to locally fairly common in the Mountains, but probably only where Crown-vetch (*Securigera varia*) is present. Uncommon in the Sandhills region. Rare to uncommon elsewhere in the western and southern Coastal Plain and the lower Piedmont, west to Orange County. Seemingly rare in the central and upper Piedmont. Likely absent in most of the northern and central Coastal Plain, but more study needed.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Supposedly three broods, ranging from late March to mid-October. The flight charts suggest a brood from late March to mid- or late May downstate, another brood from about early June to mid-July, and a large brood from about mid-July into October. The Mountain first brood seems to be from late March to early June, and then one large brood from mid-June into September. It is not clear from the flight chart that there is a third brood in the Mountains. In fact, the flight charts for all three provinces are a bit "muddled", but at least this species has a nearly continuous flight from spring into mid-fall in each province.

HABITAT: The habitats in NC are dry places, usually near or in open woodlands. Specific habitats are Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*)/scrub oak sandhills, edges and trails through dry woods, clearcuts, dry powerline clearings, and the like. In some places, it even occurs in gardens, thanks to plantings of its foodplants, mainly wild indigos (*Baptisia* spp.). In the Mountains, the species occurs along roadbanks, other roadsides, and fields where the introduced Crown-vetch is planted or has escaped.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are herbaceous legumes (Fabaceae). Originally, these were mainly wild indigos (*Baptisia* spp.) and lupines (*Lupinus* spp.), which are the foodplants downstate of the Mountains. The caterpillars now also feed on Crown-vetch, which is often planted on road banks to prevent erosion; this plant is locally abundant in the Mountains but is infrequent downstate. In a few areas of the state, such as around Raleigh and Durham, they are mainly found at arboretums and gardens with planted Blue Wild Indigo (*B. aberrans*), and are essentially missing from the "wilds" in the eastern Piedmont. The adults often perch on sand or dirt, but they nectar on a wide variety of flowers.

COMMENTS: In NC it is easiest to find in the Mountains, if you can find sizable patches of Crown- vetch on roadbanks or fields; near such patches you can sometimes find at least five Wild Indigos. But elsewhere downstate, it is found mostly in upland areas, with your best bet being in the Sandhills, where it can be tough to find. The species has greatly increased in states to our north, as the planting of Crown-vetch has helped the butterfly to expand onto roadsides and banks.

One of the highlights of the 2017 season, though not seemingly one to arouse excitement from the butterfly community, was the photographing of an individual by Salman Abdulali in Greenville (Pitt County) on September 25. Alan Belden had observed one farther east in Tyrrell County several weeks earlier. These are our first reports for the central and eastern Coastal Plain.