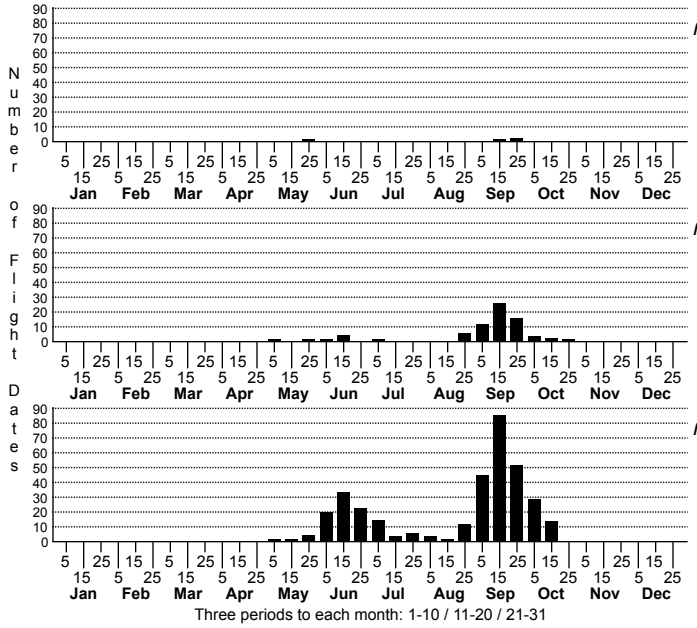
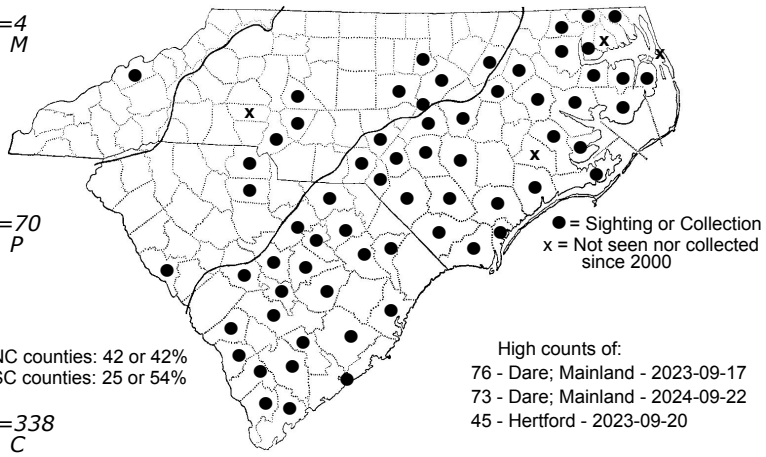
Yehl Skipper *Poanes yehl*





NC counties: 42 or 42%
SC counties: 25 or 54%

High counts of:
76 - Dare; Mainland - 2023-09-17
73 - Dare; Mainland - 2024-09-22
45 - Hertford - 2023-09-20

Earliest date: Pender 10 May 1991
Latest date: Harnett; P 31 Oct 1999

Status and Rank

State	Global
S4	G4

DISTRIBUTION: Essentially throughout the Coastal Plain; also sparingly in the eastern and southern portions of the Piedmont, where recorded inland to Durham, Chatham, Rowan, and Lincoln counties. An apparently small, isolated colony has been found at a low elevation in the Mountains in Madison County, where first found in 2013 and again in 2014 and 2017. Otherwise, it is absent from the Mountains and nearly all of the western and northern Piedmont.

ABUNDANCE: Generally uncommon but widespread; may be fairly common at a few local sites (such as Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and just north of Pettigrew State Park). It is somewhat more numerous in tidewater counties than in the upper 2/3rds of the Coastal Plain. Uncommon to very locally fairly common in the Sandhills; rare to very rare along the edge of the Piedmont, where its status as a breeding resident is uncertain, though known to be resident at a few sites. Extremely rare at low elevations in the Mountains (Madison County).

FLIGHT PERIOD: Two broods. In the Coastal Plain the first brood is from late May to late July, but June is the primary month. The second brood, clearly larger than the first, is generally from late August to mid-October. The limited Piedmont population has a very small first brood, apparently from mid- or late May to early July; the second brood is from late August to mid-October. The four Mountain records do show two broods, though only one is for the first brood -- May 26; the other three show a second brood in the last half of September, at a minimum.

HABITAT: This is supposedly a wetland species, though it is often found several hundred yards from wet places. It is typically found along edges of swamps or other wet woods, along trails or dirt roads through such woods, ditches, savannas, and edges of marshes. It is not a marsh species, and it favors partly shaded places. However, many adults nectar on flowers hundreds of yards from wetlands, such as in dry Longleaf Pine (Pinus palustris) woods. If the foodplant is cane (Arundinaria spp.) or some other wetland species, the adults certainly wander well away from such areas.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Cane (Arundinaria spp.) is supposedly the (sole?) foodplant, but the butterfly is seldom seen very close to these plants; apparently no one in NC has seen females ovipositing, at least yet. There is no affinity between Yehl Skippers and cane stands in NC, especially in the fall. It nectars on many plants of wetlands, such as Pickerelweed (Pontederia cordata), Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias incarnata), and Blue Mistflower (Conoclinium coelestinum). The second brood, and perhaps the first also, often moves into uplands to nectar on blazing-star (Liatris spp.) and other upland composites.

COMMENTS: This species is considered rare by some references. Though not common in NC, it certainly is not rare. In fact, in fall 2023, several observers tallied remarkable numbers: 45 at a site in Hertford County and an amazing 76 at a site on mainland Dare County. The species is definitely baffling in some respects, as I have seen many in the fall in Sandhills uplands, far from cane stands and wetland habitats. Randy Emmitt and Will Cook observed the species in southeastern Lincoln County in 1999 for a slight inland range extension into the southern Piedmont. Beth Brinson photographed one (confirmed by the authors) "out of range" in Rowan County in 2008. Most shocking was the photographing of two or three female Yehls along the French Broad River in Madison County by Sue Perry and Gail Lankford, on September 24, 2013; the photos were confirmed by other biologists. The species was seen again at the same site in September 2014, as well as in May and September 2017, to confirm a resident population there.

The scarcity of first brood records in the Piedmont, as compared with the obvious and strong first brood in the Coastal Plain, where certainly a resident, is very striking. Skippers in the genus Poanes are not thought to be migratory, so likely this is evidence of a winter-stressed species, such that very little of the fall-season progeny in the Piedmont is able to survive the winter.