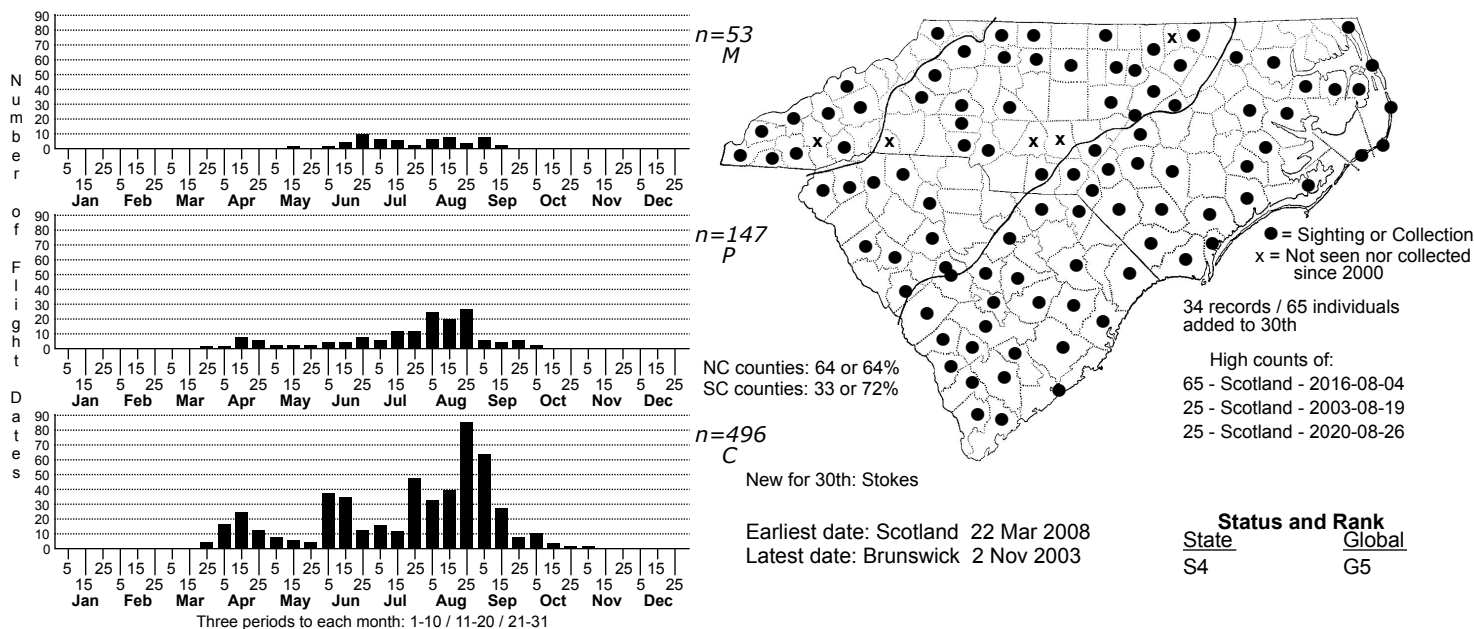


Zarucco Duskywing *Erynnis zarucco*



DISTRIBUTION: Scattered over the state, but very rare in the northern mountains (where it might not be a resident species) and some northern boundary counties east of the mountains. Still no records for the extreme northern Coastal Plain, other than in Currituck County (one record in 2020). Primarily found in the southern half of the state, but with many records in the northeastern Piedmont (where field work is greater than anywhere else).

ABUNDANCE: Fairly common in the Sandhills and in the southern tidewater areas. Uncommon over most of the Coastal Plain; rare to uncommon in the eastern and southern Piedmont; and rare in the southern half of the mountains. Very rare in the northwestern Piedmont, and presumed very rare (if not locally absent) in the northern Coastal Plain. Likely absent in nearly all of the northern mountains. In 2016, Jeff Phippen and I had a remarkable one-day count of 65 individuals in Scotland County; this more than doubled the previous state one-day count.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Probably three broods, but might be migratory in some areas (such as the mountains and western Piedmont). Broods in the Coastal Plain are a small one from late March into May; early June to mid-July; and a primary one from mid-July to early October, sparingly into early November. The Piedmont data also seem to indicate two very small broods prior to the largest one in late July and August. Likely just two broods in the mountains (if it breeds there at all); records fall between mid-May and mid-September.

HABITAT: This species is characteristic of hot, sandy places. Habitats are usually Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*)/scrub oak woodlands and openings, such as dirt roads through sandhills, dry powerline clearings, sunny scrub habitats, and so forth. The "tidewater" range presumably relates mainly to records in coastal fringe sandhills, margins of dry woods, dunes, and other sandy places near the coast.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: Foodplants are legumes (Fabaceae), mostly herbaceous species. Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is a foodplant in some parts of the East but is rare in the Coastal Plain; perhaps Dwarf Locust (*R. nana*) is used in NC. The species nectars on a wide variety of flowers, but it is commonly seen taking moisture and minerals on dirt roads.

COMMENTS: In my mind, this butterfly conjures up scorching hot weather and blazing hot sands. Zaruccos often perch on white sands in open Longleaf Pine habitats and on the sandy dirt roads and jeep trails in these habitats. Males are quite territorial, flying back and forth along sandy roads and perching on the tips of grass stems and other vegetation 1-3 feet off the ground. Most references indicate that the Zarucco is most likely to be confused with the Wild Indigo Duskywing; this is indeed true for females, which are very similar. However, male Zaruccos are often confused in NC with the male Horace's Duskywing, though male Horace's are not as strongly territorial as Zaruccos are. Some Zaruccos seen in NC might be migrants from farther south, but this is mostly a speculation because the spring brood is very small.