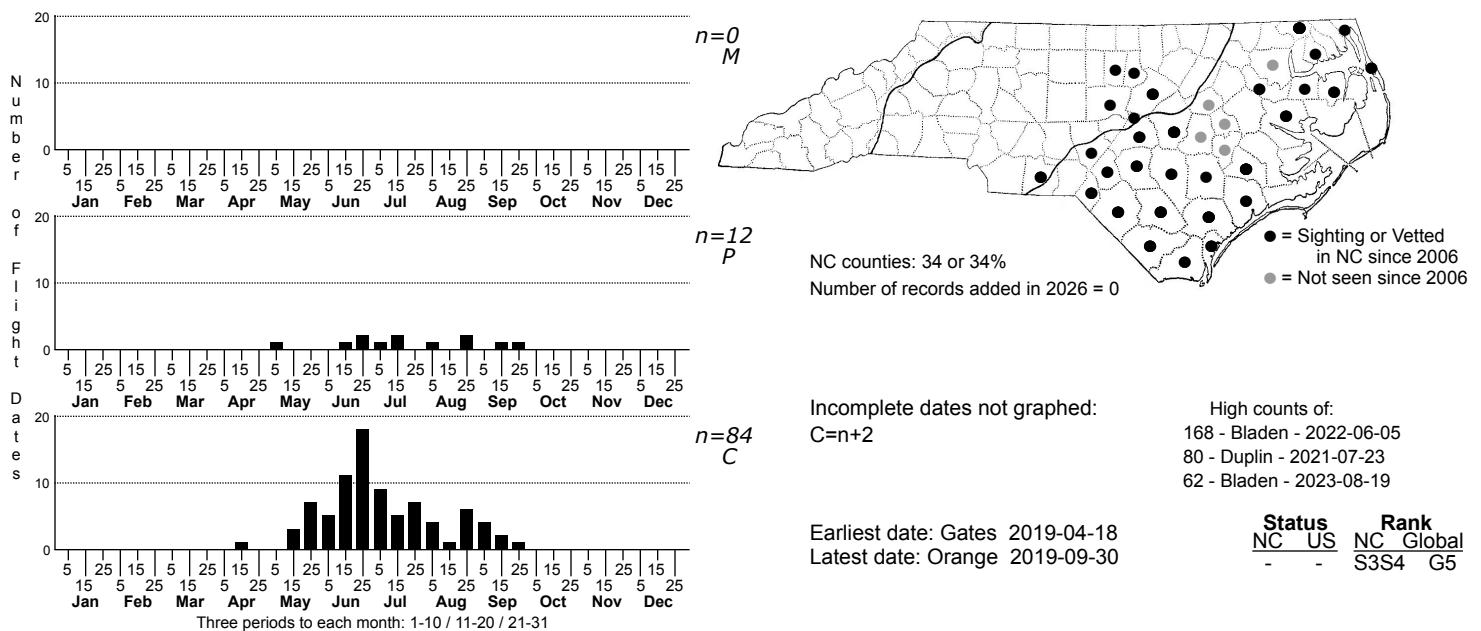


## *Telebasis byersi* Duckweed Firetail



**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the Coastal Plain, but essentially absent from the adjacent Piedmont, though there are recent records for the eastern portion (Orange, Wake, and Anson counties). Absent from the mountains. Possibly absent in some counties in the northeastern Coastal Plain. Expanding its range inland and presumably also at more sites within the Coastal Plain, in the last 10 years.

**ABUNDANCE:** Uncommon and local over much of the Coastal Plain, but can be numerous in a few places, as witnessed by a remarkable one-day tally of 168 at a Bladen County impoundment in 2022! There are a few other counts of 20 or more. Very rare in the Piedmont portion of the range, where all records so far are of singletons accidentally found by the photographers; it has not been intentionally found in this province yet.

**FLIGHT:** The records fall between mid-May to late September, though there is a recent (2019) sight record for mid-April at a location (Merchants Millpond State Park) with numerous records.

**HABITAT:** As the name implies, found mostly at ponds or swampy pools where there are dense mats of duckweeds; older millponds have a handful of records. However, seems to avoid, or be scarce in, areas where Eastern Pondhawks (a presumed predator) are abundant.

**BEHAVIOR:** Commonly perches on duckweed or other floating vegetation. Note that the majority of the photos on the webpage are males perched on duckweeds.

**COMMENTS:** The male is so bright red that, where present, it should be obvious. There has been much effort in sampling Sandhills lakes and ponds in recent years, and this striking species is very localized there -- yet has been found at a few sites farther west in the eastern Piedmont. However, stands of duckweeds are quite local; most Sandhills ponds have plenty of floating aquatic plants but seem to lack duckweed species. Even in Coastal Plain sites that have an abundance of duckweeds, spotting a Firetail can be very difficult, at least from shore, especially where Eastern Pondhawks are commonly seen perching on the duckweeds. Mike Turner has had excellent success in finding the species in the past few years, though he often wades into the ponds for closer searching, counting, and photographing. Based on the great number of recent records, many with photos, there is no doubt that the species is spreading in range and is moving westward in the state.