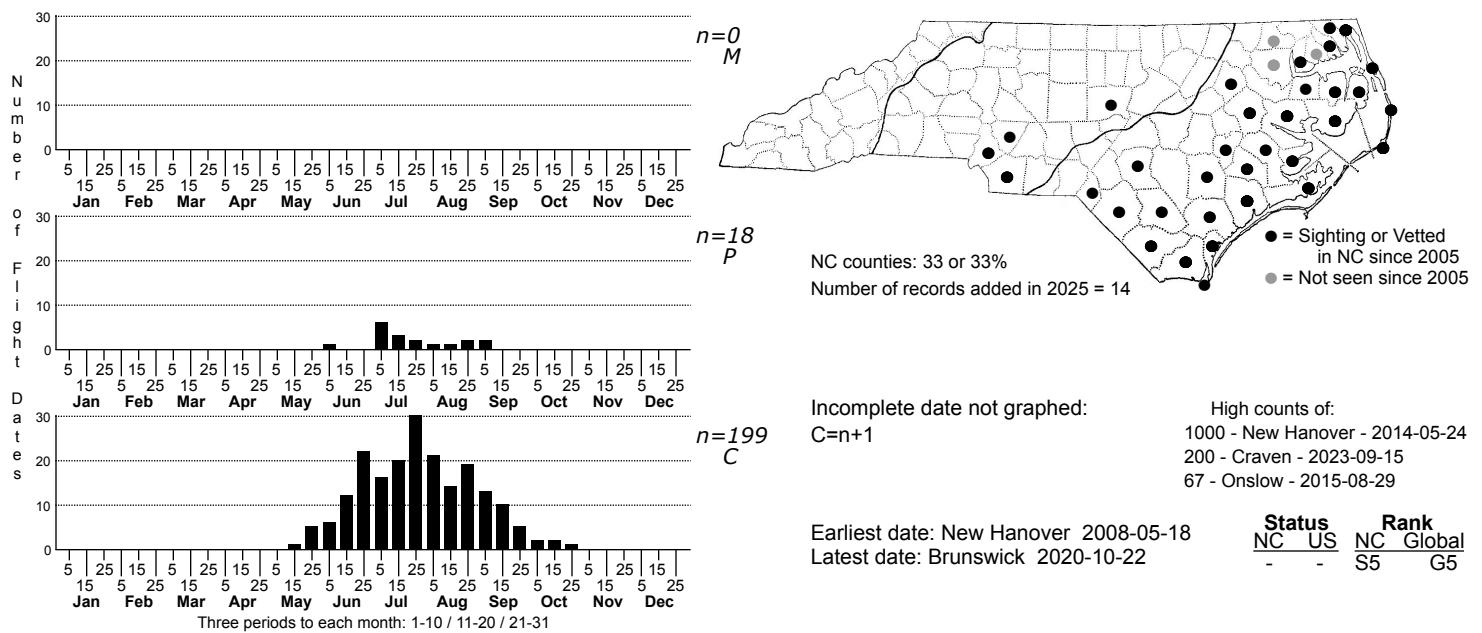


Brachymesia gravida Four-spotted Pennant



DISTRIBUTION: Widespread in the Coastal Plain's tidal counties. Ranges westward in recent years into the central and upper Coastal Plain. Thought formerly to be a presumed storm-based stray to the central Piedmont (Mecklenburg County), where several were seen and documented with photos on multiple dates in 2018; and several more were seen and photographed in Union County in 2023 by George Andrews. Another photographed in Chatham County in July 2021 (and another or the same individual there in September) also came immediately after passage of a tropical storm. The species has also been documented for Cabarrus County in 2024. This is one of just roughly five "primarily coastal" dragonflies in NC (along with Seaside Dragonlet, Needham's Skimmer, Roseate Skimmer, and Marl Pennant). A photograph of one (and with five seen) in Cumberland County in 2013 extended the range inward by 15-20 miles in the southern part of the Coastal Plain. New middle Coastal Plain records were made in 2022 in Duplin and Robeson counties, filling in small gaps near the inner part of the range. Despite a considerable amount of recent odonate field work at lakes and ponds in the Sandhills region, the species has so far (2023) not yet been found in this multi-county region.

ABUNDANCE: Common close to tidal/brackish waters; much less common -- rare to uncommon -- in areas well away (several dozen miles) from tidal waters. Very rare stray and a very local breeder into the southern and eastern Piedmont, mainly after tropical storms.

FLIGHT: A wide flight period during the warmer months, ranging from mid-May to mid-October.

HABITAT: This is one of the few dragonflies in the East that favors brackish water for breeding; habitats include brackish lakes, ponds, and ditches, but also still fresh water habitats also. The Piedmont records are from the margins of lakes and ponds.

BEHAVIOR: Adults are often seen in some numbers flying along ponds and ditches, frequently perching on twigs and vegetation in easy view of the observer.

COMMENTS: The white stigmas are very conspicuous and identify these dragonflies, even if the single large dark patch near the node on each wing isn't seen at first glance. Adults often obelisk. Thus, its behavior, unique markings, and occurrence in open habitats render it easy to identify and one of the favorites among odonate watchers. The photo record from Mecklenburg County in early June 2018 is likely attributable to the passage of Tropical Storm Alberto a few days earlier. To follow up on that record, other biologists there recorded the species on three later dates, including an excellent four seen on July 8 and another five on August 4; surprisingly these records came from several locations in the county! It would not be surprising if resident populations become established in the southern and eastern Piedmont in upcoming years, considering the recent inward spread into the western Coastal Plain (e.g., Robeson, Cumberland, and Edgecombe counties).