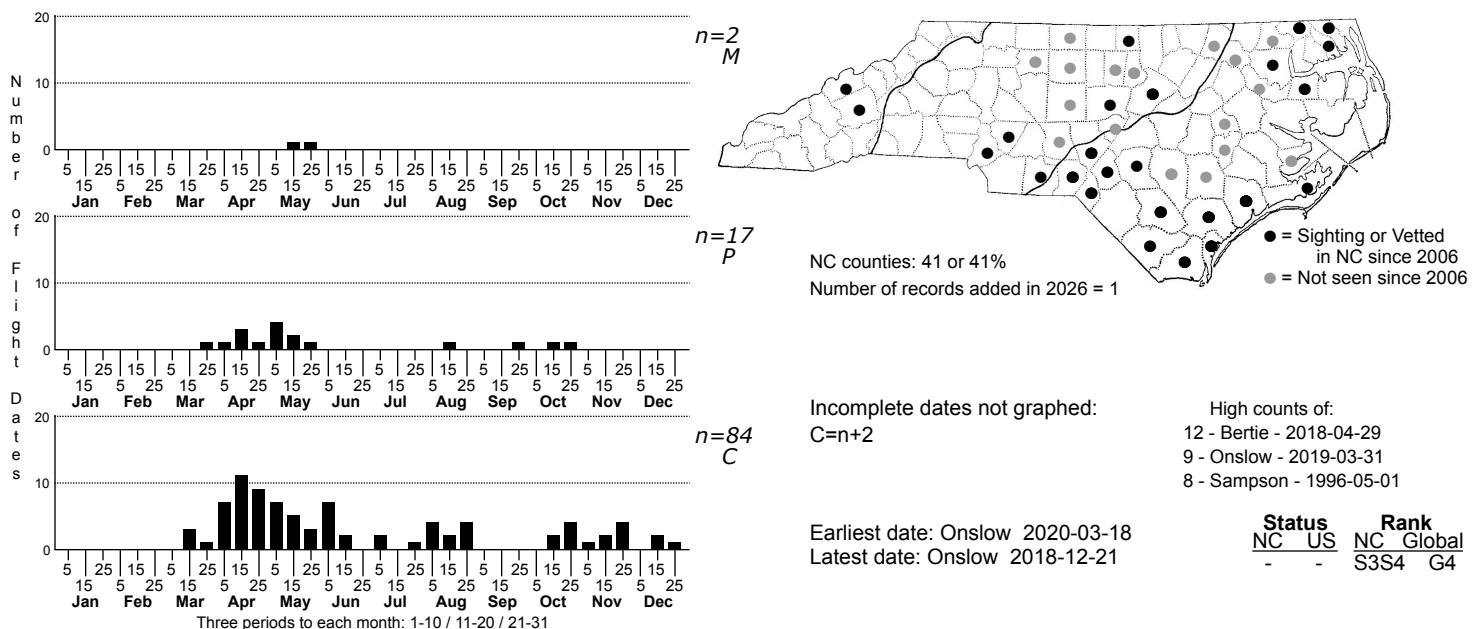


Ischnura prognata Furtive Forktail



DISTRIBUTION: Scattered over most of the Coastal Plain and the eastern half of the Piedmont. Nonetheless, it has been recorded from slightly fewer than half of the counties within this eastern NC range. A 2019 photograph from Buncombe County, in the mountains, was a remarkable record and a first for that province; another record in 2021 came from nearby Madison County. Thus, it could well range throughout the Piedmont, but in the mountains clearly is found only at very low elevations, so far only in the French Broad River valleys.

ABUNDANCE: Rare to uncommon in the lower half of the Coastal Plain (inward to about Bertie and Bladen counties), and certainly rare in the upper Coastal Plain and into the eastern half of the Piedmont. Extremely rare farther westward, with just the single 2019 and 2021 mountain records and 2022 records for Mecklenburg and Cabarrus counties. It is certainly overlooked in its shady habitat. The peak count of just 12 individuals is indicative of its relative scarcity, as is its spotty range in the state.

FLIGHT: The flight patterns are oddly "bimodal", seemingly one that aestivates in the warmer months. Most of the combined Coastal Plain and Piedmont records fall between late March and mid-June, and again between mid-October and late December.

HABITAT: Streams, swamp edges, and other pools under heavy shade, essentially always under a forest canopy.

BEHAVIOR: Quite shy, this species comes by its common name honestly. Individuals perch low, often hidden in vegetation, especially in shady places. They are best searched for by standing at the edge of a swampy pool and looking for their slow gliding movements amid the vegetation, rather than scanning vegetation for perched individuals in their mostly shaded haunts.

COMMENTS: This species' odd habitat selection -- shaded waters in forests -- makes it somewhat more difficult to survey for, and observe/photograph -- than other damselflies. This behavior is at least partly responsible for its spotty range in the state. Mark Shields has provided several recent (2016-21) photos from the southeastern corner of the state, and several others added photos from the northern Coastal Plain in 2018. Jason Love and others captured and photographed one in the mountains in 2019, for a most surprising record and a major range extension. Interestingly and oddly, our first record from fairly well-worked Brunswick County did not come until 2020, with a photo posted on the iNaturalist website.