

## *Gomphaeschna furcillata* Harlequin Darner

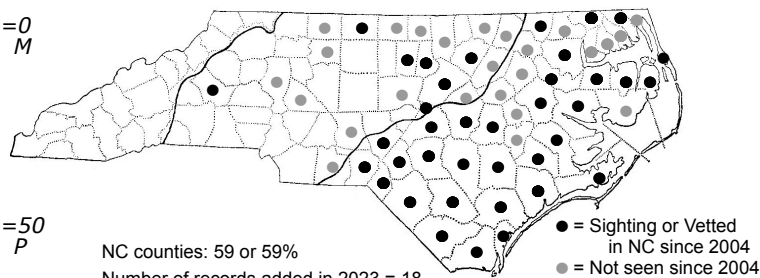
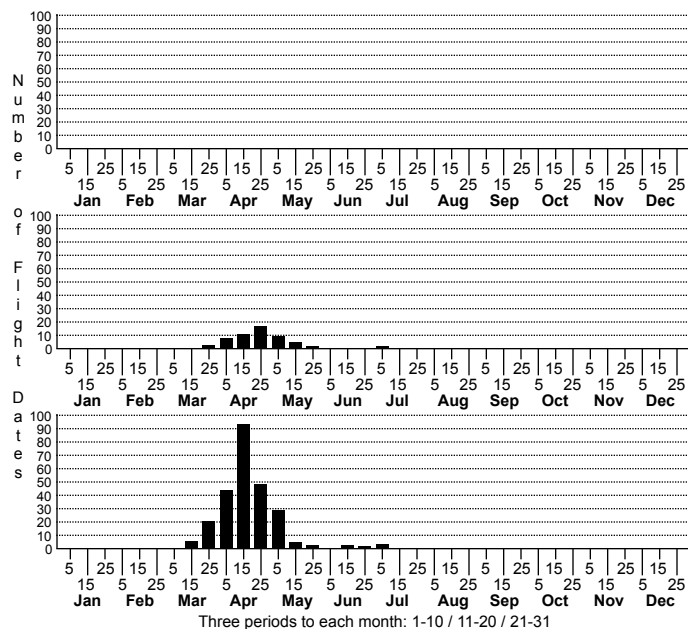


Photo (vetted) in 2024: Dare; OBU

Incomplete date not graphed:  
C=n+1

Earliest date: Carteret 2018-03-11  
Latest date: Wake 1903-07-08

High counts of:  
500 - Gates - 2007-04-13  
50 - Gates - 2018-04-12  
45 - Washington - 2008-03-28

Status		Rank	
NC	US	NC	Global
-	-	S4S5	G5

**DISTRIBUTION:** Throughout the Coastal Plain, and the eastern two-thirds of the Piedmont. Ranges as far west as Stokes, Forsyth, and Iredell counties, though there was an unconfirmed (sight) report from Burke County in spring 2014. The occurrence in most of the Piedmont is spotty and consists mostly of older records.

**ABUNDANCE:** Generally uncommon to infrequent over the Coastal Plain, but can be locally common to very common (in swarms). Rare to uncommon in the extreme lower Piedmont, but quite rare and declining in the central Piedmont. (There are a number of new records, documented by photos, of the closely related Taper-tailed Darner in the Piedmont, but as can be seen from the Harlequin Darner "Record Recency" map, there are very few recent records for the Piedmont, and none west of Orange County.)

**FLIGHT:** Spring season, but sparingly into early summer. Its flight in the Coastal Plain is from mid-March to mid-May, with scattered records to early July; the Piedmont flight period is narrower -- very late March to late May. The peak of the flight is in mid-April.

**HABITAT:** Typically near swamps or wetter bottomlands, but also near wooded creeks.

**BEHAVIOR:** This species has a fairly unusual behavior. Males patrol over swamps or marshes, but also along roads through wetlands and also in nearby uplands. They fly generally from 3-6 feet off the ground, often back and forth, and sometimes hover in the observer's face! They do not perch often, but when they do, it typically is vertically on tree trunks, but at times on humans. It is less likely to perch on man-made structures than is the similar Taper-tailed Darner.

**COMMENTS:** Dunkle (2000) calls the species "scarce" over its entire range; Beaton (2007) calls it "Rare to uncommon and local" throughout Georgia. Yet, observers have often seen dozens in some favorable spots in the NC Coastal Plain, and it can be the most commonly seen dragonfly at a few wetland areas, especially acidic wetlands such as pocosins. And, Cuyler has collection records from all but a few of the Coastal Plain counties in the state. There are disturbingly few records in recent years for the Piedmont, and the only confirmed records in the past 20 years have ranged west only to Orange County. Cuyler and maybe others had records for 7-8 counties farther to the west of Orange County, a few decades ago; despite many observers today in this province, there are no recent records there.