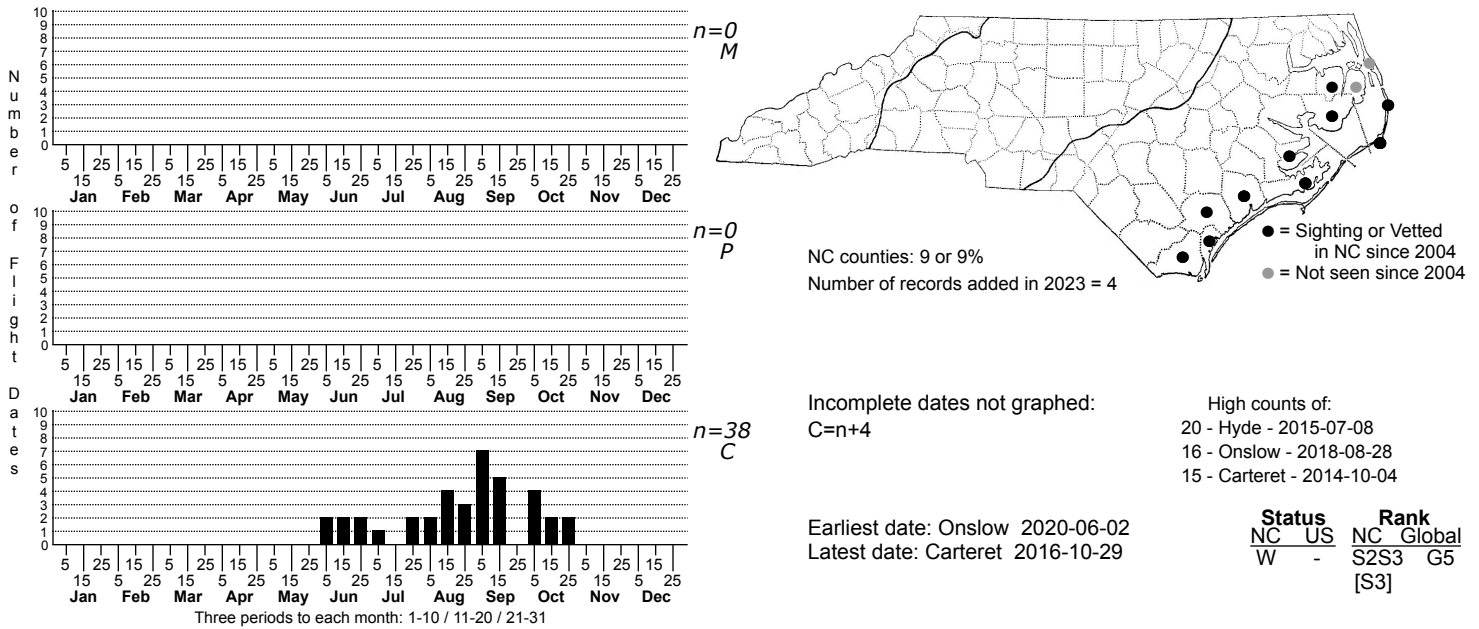


Macrodiplax balteata Marl Pennant



DISTRIBUTION: Strictly coastal, though there was an "inland" record for Tyrrell County in 2022. Ranges north in its overall range only to southeastern VA (three recent records only). Interestingly, the first record for GA came in 2006, and there are a number of recent county records for coastal SC. It is not clear if the species is a permanent resident or is at least partly migratory in NC.

ABUNDANCE: In recent years, generally uncommon to (and very locally) fairly common along the NC coast, essentially only from Pea Island southward. It does rarely occur "inland" to the nearby mainland, as witnessed by records from Tyrrell, mainland Hyde, and Pamlico counties. Dunkle (2000) calls it "common coastally", though that may apply mainly to FL. For whatever reason, until a decade ago there were very few records of the species north of FL, but owing to global warming or some other factors, the species is increasing in numbers or at least increasingly straying northward, in NC, SC, and GA.

FLIGHT: The flight occurs from early June to the end of October; however, most records are from mid-August into October. This pattern of flight dates may suggest that the species is primarily a post-breeding migrant/stray from farther south. A resident pennant species should have a flight season starting at least by early summer, and have peak numbers in summer or before September. However, more data are needed to clarify the situation, and there is certainly the possibility that this species is a scarce resident (though maybe with immigrants moving into the state in fall).

HABITAT: Unusual for most dragonfly species in NC; breeds in brackish ponds or other pools with high pH waters, such as possibly man-made marl ponds near the coast or other man-made lakes and ponds in coastal areas. The highest state counts have been at a natural lake (Lake Mattamuskeet) and from tidal marshes. Thus, it has a fairly wide array of sunny coastal habitats, from salt water (tidal marshes) to fresh water (lakes and ponds).

BEHAVIOR: Males perch at the pools or marsh edges, often on twigs or stems in the water; they make forays over the water. However, they may occur in fields or other open areas somewhat far away from coastal water. Apparently females also stay close to water when foraging.

COMMENTS: Some important records of Marl Pennant were made in fall 2014 at Fort Macon State Park in Carteret County, with a former state record one-day count of 15 individuals, documented by several photos. A number of other recent records have been made, with photos now available for all coastal counties from Dare to Brunswick. Of the five primarily coastal dragonflies in NC -- along with Needham's Skimmer, Roseate Skimmer, Four-spotted Pennant, and Seaside Dragonlet -- the Marl Pennant is the only scarce species. Hopefully, it is a resident species in NC! Even if not, it can be somewhat reliably seen -- but never expected -- from the latter half of August into October at tidal marshes and other coastal waters.