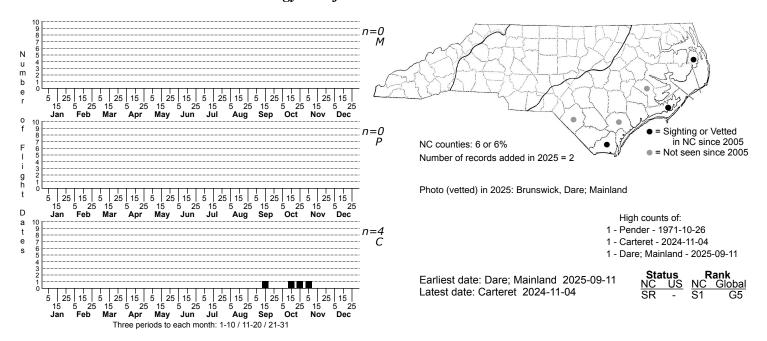
Triacanthagyna trifida Phantom Darner



DISTRIBUTION: The coast and southeastern corner of the state only; ranging north to Dare County and inland to Robeson County. A recent photo record (2024) confirms that it is still present in NC and is probably not simply a mid- or late fall southern stray. Another set of photos in 2025 confirms the range north to mainland Dare County, the northernmost known report; a second 2025 record came from Brunswick County. These last three records also make it clear it is indeed a resident species in NC.

ABUNDANCE: Apparently very rare or rare, known from just six counties. However, as it is often crepuscular, special effort must be made to see it. Thus, its true abundance would be difficult to determine. After an absence of 50+ years without a conclusive record (last was in 1971), there is now documentation in 2024 for Carteret County and others in 2025 for Dare and Brunswick counties.

FLIGHT: Perhaps the latest flying odonate in NC -- in terms of flight period, essentially only in the fall. The known NC dates range from 11 September to 4 November. The flight in GA is early October to mid-December.

HABITAT: Small wooded pools, typically near rivers, in heavily forested areas. The 2024 individual, a male, was flying near the ground "over a small wet sphagnum moss-filled depression" according to the iNaturalist comments. The 2025 individuals were in a swampy area near a boardwalk and along a forest margin with a field, but close to a creek.

BEHAVIOR: The species flies only in fairly dark conditions, typically the last two hours of daylight, or on very dark, cloudy days. However, the 2024 individual was seen at 1:38 PM, on a partly cloudy day. The first 2025 darner foraged along a forest trail and perched a few times at eye-level until disturbed; the second briefly perched in a tree about head height as well.

COMMENTS: The species has a very thin abdomen and should be readily distinguished by shape if seen well, a rare circumstance in NC. Its very late flight season, plus crepuscular habits, means that a biologist is unlikely to see the species during casual field work, without a special effort directed just for it. Because there were no recent records, and it has been recorded from just four counties, the N.C. Natural Heritage Program has deemed it worthy of tracking (as of fall 2010) as a Significantly Rare species. The NC Rank was moved from S2? to S1? in November 2012, to highlight the lack of recent records. In 2020, the Natural Heritage Program moved the rank to SH (Historical). However, now that Amy Padgett has photographed it in fall 2024 in Carteret County and published this finding in the journal Argia (Padgett 2024), the NCNHP has moved the State Rank back to S1. On 11 September 2025, Joe Girgente posted two photos on iNaturalist, both of the individual when perched, to document this northern record. Hunter Phillips photographed a male at the Ev-Henwood Nature Preserve in east-central Brunswick County on 16 October 2025.