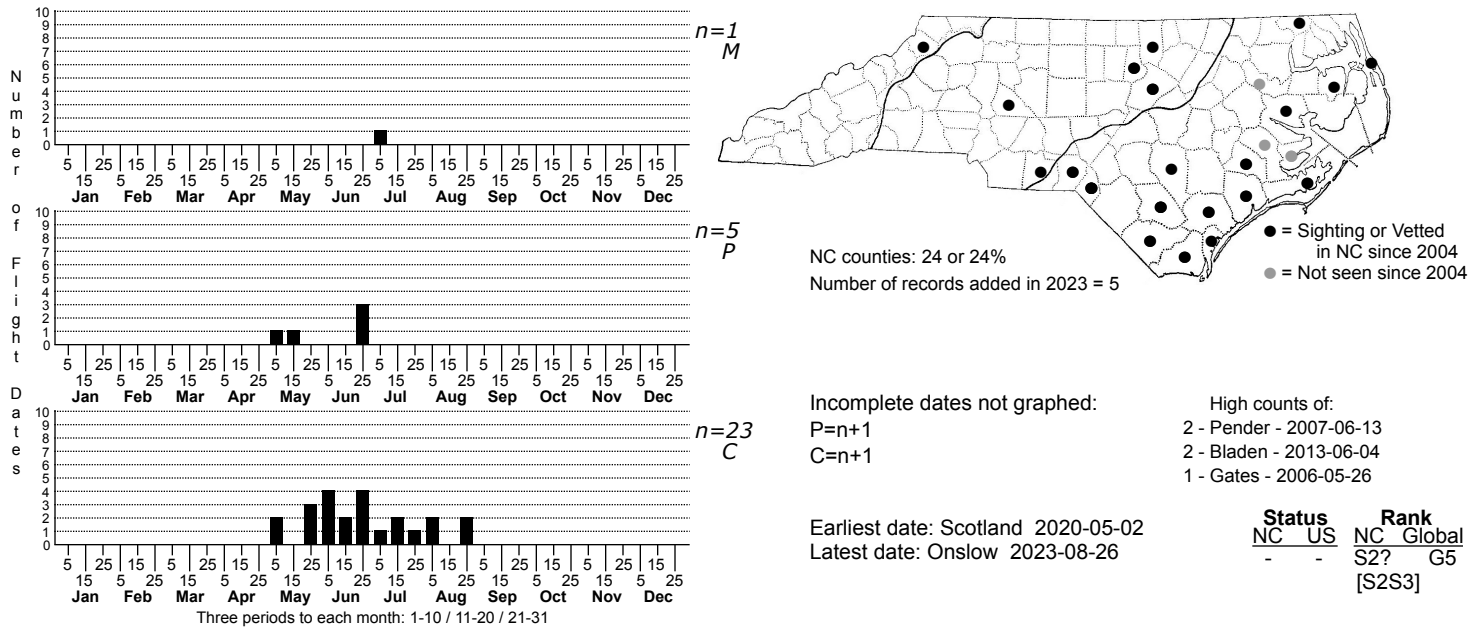


Coryphaeschna ingens Regal Darner



DISTRIBUTION: Present over much or most of the lower and southern Coastal Plain, north to Albemarle Sound and west to the Sandhills. Elsewhere, sparingly in the Coastal Plain and lower Piedmont. However, a most surprising record was documented from the northern mountains (Watauga County) in 2015, and a slightly less surprising record came from well inland Rowan County in 2019. Thus, it certainly can be present over much of the state, and it seems to be expanding its range westward. (New county records in 2021 were documented by photos in Granville and Richmond counties; and in 2022 from Brunswick, Sampson, and Anson counties.) Not surprisingly, the northern limit of the species' range is extreme southeastern VA, though it is found mainly in the Southern Atlantic and Gulf coastal plains.

ABUNDANCE: Easily overlooked (as a Swamp Darner) and difficult to identify for certain except through photographs. Seemingly rare, but perhaps uncommon in some of the southern coastal counties north to Jones and Craven. Abundance difficult to assess because of its often high-flying behavior, and its similarity to the very common Swamp Darner, making the species difficult to confirm. Most numerous in Florida. For now, however, must be considered as quite "scarce" (though possibly increasing) away from the lower Coastal Plain. (Cuyler, for example, never collected it inward from the lower Coastal Plain, though he intensively worked the entire state.)

FLIGHT: In Georgia, it flies from early April to mid-September. The relatively few (26) flight date records from NC are from 2 May to 22 August, suggesting a moderately extended flight.

HABITAT: Ponds and lakes in forested areas, but may occur over fields and other open areas.

BEHAVIOR: Typically seen flying rather high, often at treetop level, over a pond nearby. Usually discovered by luck or accident (literally as in the case of a car strike in Durham County) in the state! Many recent records are of females seen ovipositing in ponds. The individual photographed in Sampson County in 2022 "Fell from the sky while observing a flock of Purple Martins".

COMMENTS: The species is poorly known in North Carolina, recorded only from 24 counties (as of the end of 2022), though thankfully records and "range" have been increasing and expanding in recent years. It had been on the N.C. Natural Heritage Program list as a Significantly Rare species since 2012, it but was removed from that list and the Watch List also in late 2022. Though this is a very large/long species, it could easily be confused in flight (and even perched if not seen closely) with the much more common Swamp Darner. Fortunately, Conrad Wernett was able to net and photograph one (in hand) in 2013, adding a first record for Jones County. Dave Lenat collected a larva along the southern shore of Lake Waccamaw in 2014 to provide a first record for Columbus County. Kristi Baker provided excellent lateral view photos of one in 2015 from Tyrrell County, documenting a first record for that county and providing a first record for the Pamlico Peninsula. John Petranka made a remarkable discovery of one at a high elevation lake near the Blue Ridge Parkway in Watauga County (where a stray?), with photographs taken on 1 July 2015. A first record for Dare County was added (by photo) in 2020, as were records for Granville and Richmond counties in 2021 and three more counties west to Anson County in 2022. Nowadays, most recent records by photos have been of females ovipositing in lakes and ponds; the females can remain motionless in a vertical position for several minutes, her lower abdomen in the water and the tell-tale markings of the thorax visible above the water.