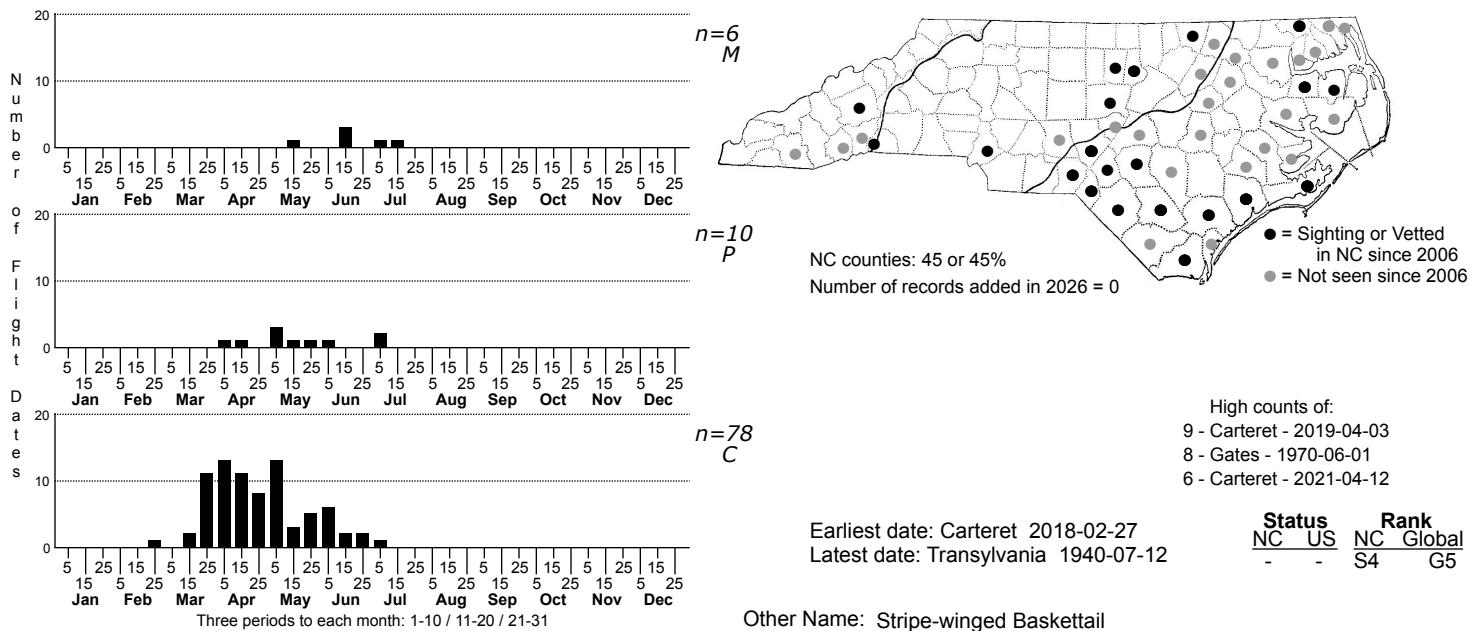


## *Epitheca costalis* Slender Baskettail



**DISTRIBUTION:** Primarily the Coastal Plain, though it does occur in the eastern and southeastern Piedmont and in the southern mountains. Likely present over other portions of the southern Piedmont between Montgomery and Polk counties. In fact, range maps in Dunkle (2000) and Beaton (2007) show that the species ought to occur over the entire state, except perhaps for the northern mountains! Thankfully, the range map in Paulson (2011) matches that of the range map for NC on this website.

**ABUNDANCE:** Generally uncommon in the Coastal Plain; much less numerous than the Common and Mantled baskettails within its Coastal Plain range. Very rare in the eastern Piedmont and southern mountains (and apparently absent elsewhere in these provinces). However, as the species is difficult to positively identify without hand examination, its true abundance is only speculation.

**FLIGHT:** Spring season for the most part, but sparingly into early summer. In the Coastal Plain, the flight is from mid- or late March to early July, but it is most numerous in April and May. Interestingly, Duncan Cuyler's records for the Great Dismal Swamp area are only in June, from Camden County; but his records elsewhere in NC fall between April and July (Roble and Cuyler 1998). The meager data for the Piedmont fall between early April and early July, whereas those in the mountains fall between mid-May and mid-July. A 2018 record from 27 February was nearly a month earlier than the previous earliest date.

**HABITAT:** Mainly at ponds or small lakes, rarely at slow-moving rivers.

**BEHAVIOR:** Males patrol small territories around the pond margins. As with all baskettails, adults are more easily seen and studied when they are foraging or perching in an oblique manner on twigs a foot or two above ground along dirt roads and wide trails.

**COMMENTS:** This species was formerly called the Stripe-winged Baskettail, but only a few females show the characteristic "named" dark bar on the leading edge of the wings. The species averages slightly longer than Common Baskettail, but it is best separated by the thinner abdomen that is narrowed near the thorax, giving a more spindle-shape to the abdomen. The species can easily be confused in the field with Common Baskettail, and thus observers are likely either overlooking this less common species or are reluctant to submit sight reports for it. In fact, the website editors determined (in late 2016) that one to several previous photos on this website were actually of Common Baskettails and not Slender Baskettails.