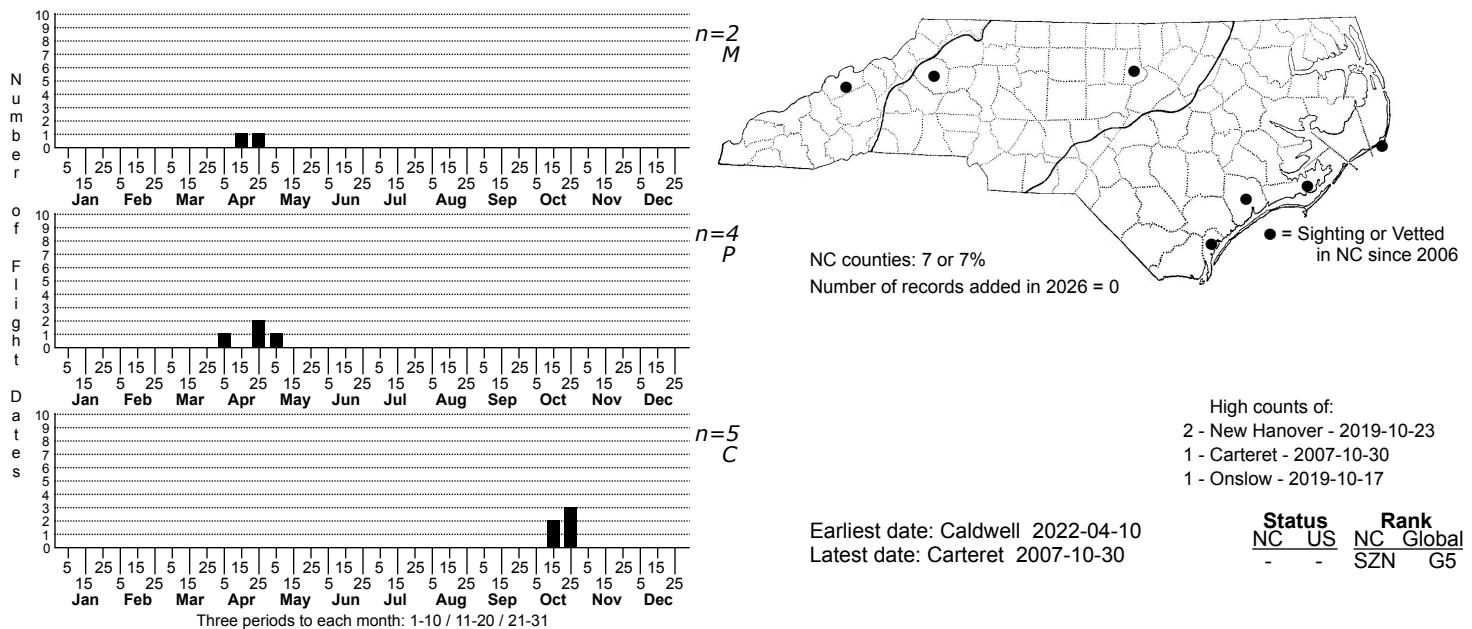


Sympetrum corruptum Variegated Meadowhawk



DISTRIBUTION: Resident in the western and central parts of the continent, but just a migrant or stray in the southern Atlantic Coast states. Perhaps resident east to western TN and the panhandle of FL. Casual to now very rare stray to NC, where all but a few records known to us are from coastal counties, in 2007 and in 2019 (four records), in the fall season. The first spring records, from the mountains (Madison County) and the eastern Piedmont (Durham County), came in 2020. Another came from Caldwell County in spring 2022. Thus, a pattern in NC is now clear; strays seem to fly past the inner portions in fall and "get stopped" by the Atlantic Ocean, where they are found in coastal habitats. There is some spring migration (from where?) back to the north or northwest, where a few are detected in the Piedmont and mountains.

ABUNDANCE: Casual to now a very rare stray. GA has a few records, and NC, SC, and VA have at least one each.

FLIGHT: As a "migrant" or stray, to be expected mainly just in the fall season along the coast, and in spring only inland (so far). The only NC dates available are 10 April, 11 April, 22 April, 24 April, 26 April, 7 May, 17 October (twice), 22 October, 23 October, and 30 October. Note that all six of the spring records are from inland (Madison, Caldwell, and Durham counties), whereas all five of the fall dates are from the coast.

HABITAT: Breeds at ponds and slow portions of streams. A stray to the East Coast, such as this species, could be seen practically anywhere, especially in coastal habitats. The one found in 2007 in NC was in dune habitat along a barrier island. The 2019 records were all from sandy coastal habitats, such as a sandy lawn, in sand dunes, at limesink ponds in coastal sandhills, and at a coastal landing near tidal water. The 2020 spring records came from a dry wooded area, but close to the French Broad River; and from an upland powerline clearing. The 2022 spring record came from a "small area of standing water" in a forested montane setting.

BEHAVIOR: As the species is a migrant to NC from farther west, it could theoretically be seen anywhere in the state. The adults perch fairly low to the ground, and sometimes even on the ground.

COMMENTS: This species was reported for NC in the IORI website checklist prepared by Bick and Mauffray (1999-2004). However, Cuyler's unpublished data contained no records for the species for NC. Fortunately, Randy Newman photographed one at Fort Macon State Park in fall 2007 for the first definitive record, though we assume there must be an older record/report prior to 2004. On 17 October 2019, Jeff Pippen photographed one near the Cape Hatteras lighthouse (Dare County) and Hunter Phillips photographed another at Morris Landing (Onslow County). Brian Bockhahn also photographed one on 22 October 2019 at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. In addition, several people -- Bockhahn, John Petraska, Mark Shields, and others at a workshop -- netted and photographed a female and observed a second (a patrolling male) at Carolina Beach State Park (New Hanover County) on 23 October 2019. In fact, the female (after being released) flew low into vegetation as if to be egg-laying. Her behavior, coupled with the male that was clearly patrolling, suggests a first possible breeding in the state. Most exciting was one photographed by Pete Dixon in the Hot Springs area of Madison County on 11 April 2020, our first record away from the coast and our first spring record. Another was photographed in the same general Hot Springs area on 22 April 2020. Following closely on those records was one photographed by Jeff Pippen in the eastern Piedmont, on 24 April 2020; John Petraska re-found this male two days later, and he also found a female nearby on 7 May 2020. Ted Wilcox photographed one in the Piedmont foothills in spring 2022, to add another county (Caldwell) to the state list. Thus, the species is apparently no longer a complete surprise in NC in the spring season, as a stray or very rare northbound or northwestbound migrant.