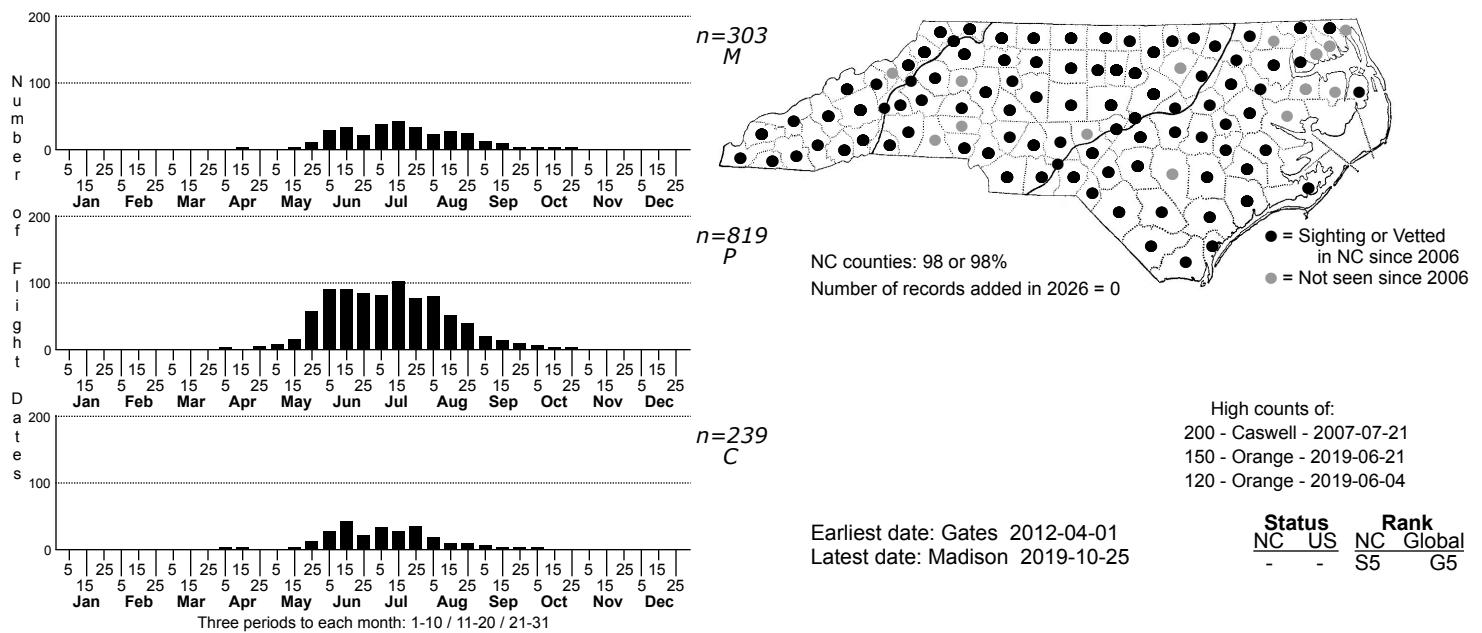


Libellula luctuosa Widow Skimmer



DISTRIBUTION: Essentially statewide; only two extreme eastern Coastal Plain counties lack records. Presumably present in all counties.

ABUNDANCE: Generally very common in the Piedmont and lower mountains; fairly common in the western Coastal Plain, though numbers decrease toward the coast, such that it is scarce in the eastern counties. Common in the middle elevations of the mountains. One of the more numerous dragonflies in the mountain province.

FLIGHT: Downstate, early or mid-April to mid-October, but not numerous until late May. In the mountains, the flight is from mid-May to late September, sparingly to mid-October.

HABITAT: Typical breeding sites as for other skimmers -- ponds, small lakes, marshes, and pools.

BEHAVIOR: Unlike most other skimmers, this species typically moves away from water to spend most of its time foraging in fields, powerline clearings, woodland borders, and other sunny to partly sunny places. Adults often perch on twigs of woody plants or on herbaceous vegetation, in such open areas.

COMMENTS: This might be the "flashiest" of our skimmers, as they are quite common, perch in open places within easy view, and have bold wing patterns. The wide black and frosted white bands of the male are impossible to miss when on the wing. Numbers of the species are seldom large at any given locale, as they seem territorial, and swarms are not generally noted. Nonetheless, it can occasionally be the most often seen dragonfly on a Piedmont walk, especially away from pond margins.