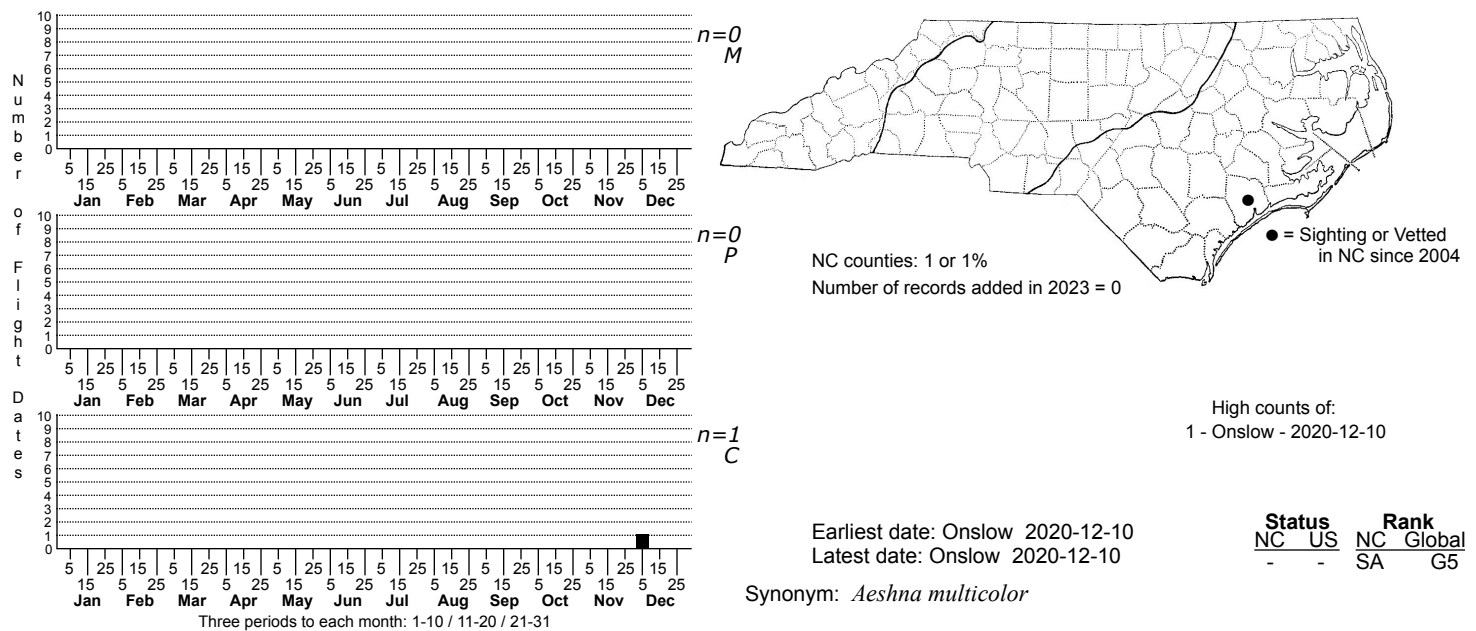


Rhionaeschna multicolor Blue-eyed Darner



DISTRIBUTION: One record of this Western species -- an individual photographed by Brian Bockhahn on 10 December 2020, at Stones Creek Game Land in Onslow County. A stray to the Eastern US; a Western species that ranges east only to southwestern WI, and the eastern parts of KS, OK, and TX. One record from Martha's Vineyard, MA, in 1943 might be the only other Eastern record.

ABUNDANCE: Accidental. Not likely to be seen again in NC for many years, as no records from adjacent states.

FLIGHT: Normal flight period is June or July into fall, such as into September in IA and in TX. However, the OdonataCentral database has a number of records for October and November, plus one in TX on 10 December (2020), the same day as the NC observation! The presence of a seemingly fresh or intact darner on 10 December -- of most any American species -- is a conundrum. It does range south well into Mexico, where perhaps it has a later flight period. Perhaps the same weather system was responsible for both of these two 10 December 2020 records?

HABITAT: Open, sunny areas around bodies of water, such as lakes, ponds, and streams in open habitats.

BEHAVIOR: Often moves away from water to feed in other open places, such as fields and even into residential areas. Records from Oklahoma indicate an eastward movement across that state in the fall. Such movement may have contributed to the species showing up in NC.

COMMENTS: Several references mention that in its range, especially in the far Western states, it is a very common, if not the most often seen, darner species, as well as often occurring close to man -- even moving to city streets to forage. Speculation will continue about how the species got to coastal NC; theories include getting caught in (pushed by or carried inside) one of several hurricanes that hit the Gulf of Mexico this fall. The only other similar species (and the other member of the genus) is Spatterdock Darner. It is a Northeastern species that ranges south to the mountains of WV and VA and to western TN, and thus would make a better case of being present in coastal NC from a geography standpoint. However, that species has slightly broader and more irregular blue thoracic stripes than does Blue-eyed, and its flight occurs only from May to July in most areas; VA's latest flight date is 1 July, for example, as reported on the Atlas of Rare Butterflies, Skippers, Moths, Dragonflies & Damselflies of Virginia website.