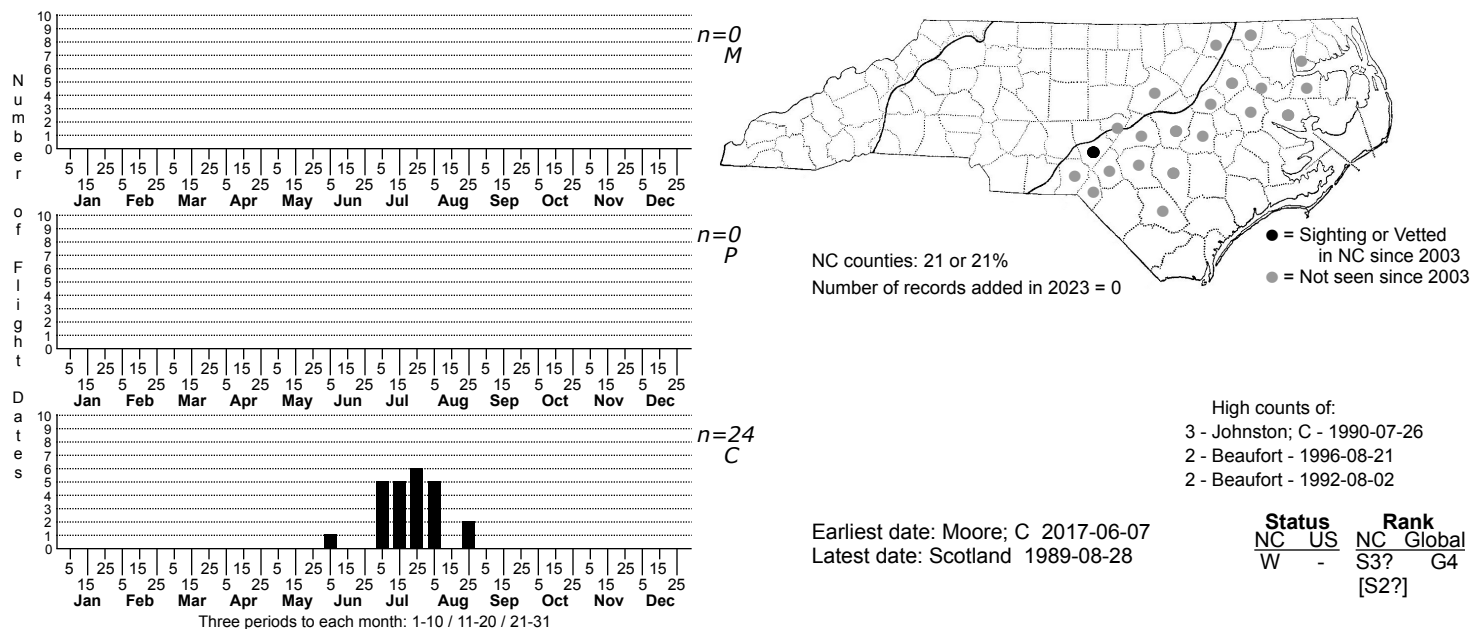


## *Somatochlora provocans* Treetop Emerald



**DISTRIBUTION:** Strictly in the western and central Coastal Plain, though possibly in the extreme eastern Piedmont (along the Fall Line). Ranges east only to Chowan, Washington, Beaufort, and Bladen counties; and west to Wake, Lee, Moore, and Richmond counties.

**ABUNDANCE:** Difficult to assess because of its high-flying habits. All references consider it to be a scarce, though not necessarily rare, species. Based on the fact that it has been recorded in NC from 21 counties, it certainly isn't overly rare. Best considered as uncommon and very easily overlooked, within its narrow range in the state.

**FLIGHT:** The flight apparently occurs between early June and late August, though we only have one record before July, and this June record came in 2017.

**HABITAT:** Small forested seeps and pools, perhaps very small streams.

**BEHAVIOR:** As the common name implies, this emerald is normally seen in flight, typically over head-height to treetop height, along and over forested roads and clearings. Adults normally perch high on twigs of canopy trees.

**COMMENTS:** This species is most likely one in which a net is required to verify records. An observer may often see high-flying dragonflies during the summer months along forested roads, especially near swamps and other wetlands. Perhaps a moderate number of these (at least in the Coastal Plain) are Treetop Emeralds, but this is only speculation. Getting a good photograph of a Treetop Emerald in a natural pose requires either much luck, much patience, or a strong telephoto lens! Interestingly, our only two records documented with photos are from the same site -- Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve, 12 years apart!

After just these two records over the last 20 years, it may be time to consider tracking records as Significantly Rare, and moving the State Rank upward to S2?. At a minimum, it is recommended to move the State Rank upwards, with S2? being suggested at the present time. Clearly, the species is very difficult to survey for owing to its high-flying habits, but it seems time to begin monitoring it and looking for ways to survey for this quite striking species. However, the N.C. Natural Heritage Program kept the species at S3? in its 2022 Rare Animal list.