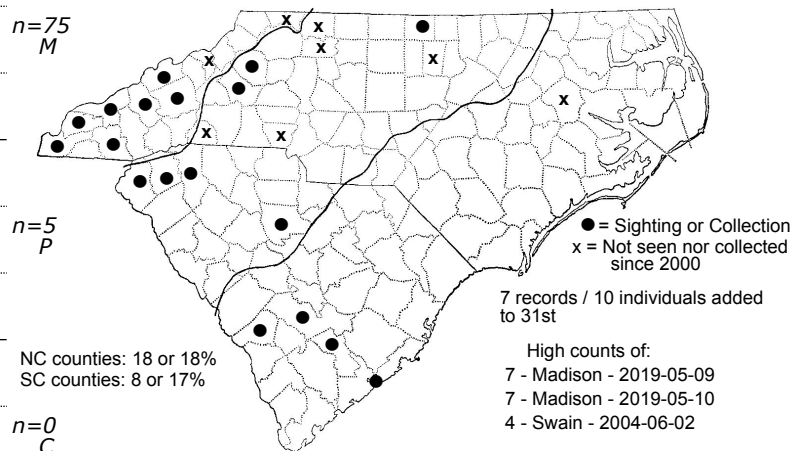
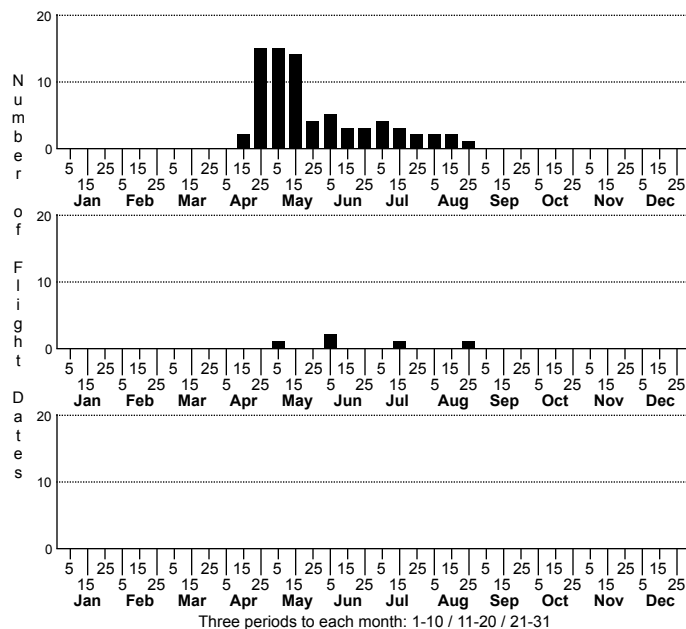


# Golden Banded-Skipper *Telegonus cellus*



Earliest date: Madison 17 Apr 2020  
Latest date: Caldwell 23 Aug 2016

Synonym: *Autochthon cellus*

Other Name: Gold-banded Skipper, Golden-banded Skipper

**Status and Rank**  
State Global  
SR - S2 G4

**DISTRIBUTION:** Presently, only in the Mountains, the Piedmont foothills, and Caswell County (at least until around 2000) in the northern Piedmont; formerly more widespread in the western and central Piedmont, including a specimen record for Pitt County in the central Coastal Plain. Despite there being scattered records also for the SC Coastal Plain and lower Piedmont, this species seems to be gone from all regions of that state except for the Mountains and upper Piedmont. (There are current colonies in the FL Panhandle, at low elevations, and thus there is always a chance of re-discovery in the Carolinas well downstate.)

**ABUNDANCE:** Rare at low to middle elevations (but mostly below 2500 feet) in the southern half of the Mountains, and extremely rare to very rare elsewhere, east to Caswell County. This is almost a "mythical" species, considering that it has been found in 18 NC counties, but we have less than 80 records for it. Yet, Kevin Caldwell found it at three places in spring 2007 in Madison and Buncombe counties, providing confirming photos from one site. The abundance has almost certainly declined in recent decades, and the range seemingly has shrunk back toward the west, for unknown reasons; we have no recent records away from the Mountains, except from Burke, Caldwell, and Caswell counties. At a site in Madison County, where most of the 2019 records emanated, observers twice found a remarkable 7 individuals there in May, with several excellent photos taken (see below).

**FLIGHT PERIOD:** Two broods, with the second a partial one. In the Mountains and foothills, the first flight is from late April into mid-June, and the smaller, second flight occurs from early July to mid-August (with just a handful of records for August). The two seen in Caswell County in early June 2000 were quite fresh, but the dates better fit the first brood, rather than the beginning of the second.

**HABITAT:** Primarily in fairly pristine shaded places -- openings in moist woods or near ravines, along creeks in moist woods, and other sites near forests and water. Should be searched for in rich woods and bottomlands with sunlit places along creeks and dirt roads. Driving U.S. Forest Service dirt roads through rich woods and along wooded streams, as slowly as possible, is your best bet to find this very elusive species.

**FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS:** The foodplant had long been considered to be solely Hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*), which is very common in moist woods and bottomlands in NC. However, a recent study by Boscoe et al. (2015) has shown that Thicket Bean (*Phaseolus polystachios*) is the sole foodplant, at least in the Eastern United States; this is an uncommon to fairly common vine that is limited mainly to rich forested slopes and bottomlands, often in the same habitats as the Hog-peanut, but more limited to high pH soils. The butterfly nectars at many plants, including blackberries (*Rubus* spp.) and milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.). Kilian Roeber (pers. comm.) has seen it nectaring on Hollow Joe-pye-weed (*Eutrochium fistulosum*); as this species blooms mainly in August and September, it is surprising that we have only a handful of records for that period, all in August.

**COMMENTS:** This species' rarity can be attributed in part to the scarcity of its foodplant; though the plant occurs over much of the state, stands of it away from the Mountains appear too small to support viable colonies of the butterfly. This skipper tends to fly more often from mid-afternoon onward, rather than in the morning. Of course, it can and does fly before mid-afternoon, but it is a "late emerging" species on a daily basis.

The discovery of a Golden Banded-Skipper in "far-eastern" Caswell County in early June 2000 by Randy Emmitt caused a tremendous amount of excitement, so much, in fact, that several of us were able to relocate the species there a few days later. However, other observers failed to find them later in June and July 2000, and I did not see the species during extensive field work in the county, including at the previous site, in 2009. Our first report of more than a single individual in a day came in 2004, when Shay Garriock observed two on one day and four on another, each in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. A very worn individual seen by Jeff Pippen and me on August 23, 2016 extended the latest date in the state by 12 days. Pete Dixon and others have found it on numerous occasions in Madison County in recent years, but mainly in one small area.