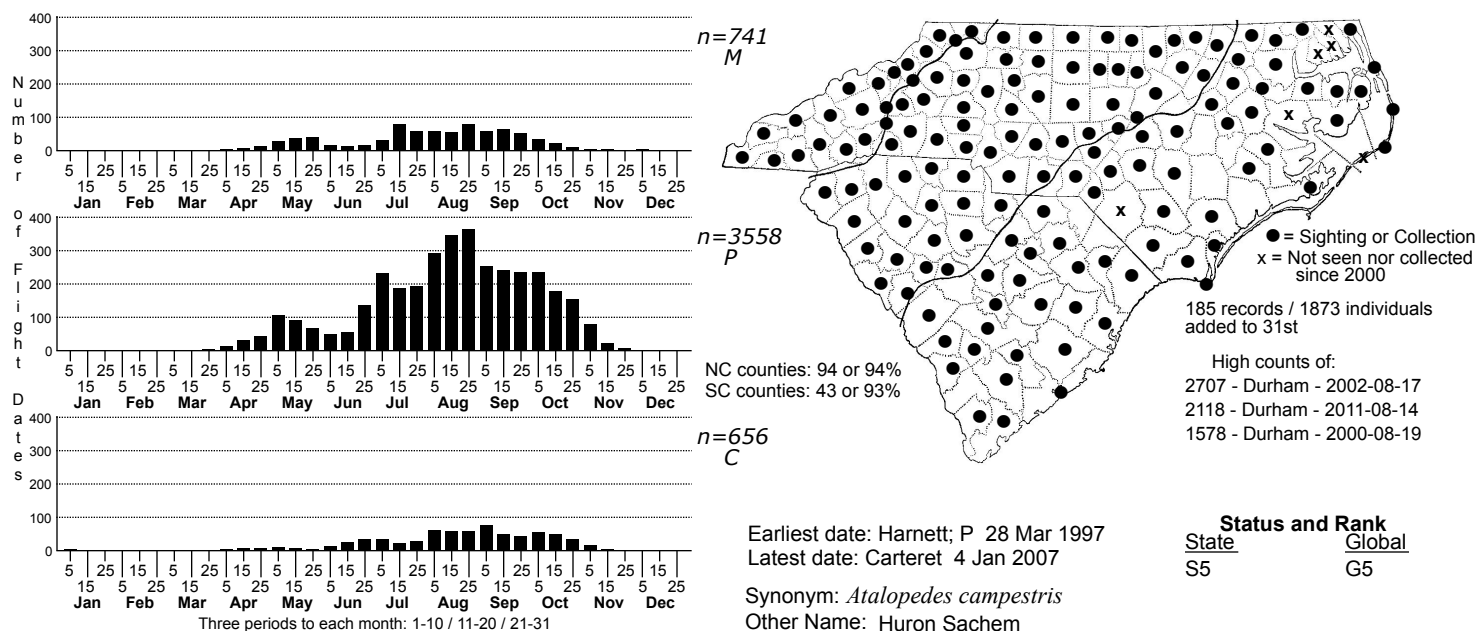


Sachem *Atalopedes huron*



DISTRIBUTION: Statewide; occurring in all provinces, and presumably present in all 100 counties.

ABUNDANCE: Declining in the eastern half of the state in recent years, for uncertain reasons. Common to abundant in most of the Piedmont, common in the Mountains, fairly common to formerly common in the upper Coastal Plain, but generally uncommon in the lower half of the Coastal Plain. Can be rather rare toward the coast now. This is one of the most often seen skippers in the state (at least in the Piedmont and Mountains) from July onward. The numerous observers in Wake County used to see as many Sachems as Fiery Skippers, but in the last few years, that ratio has gone from close to 1:1 to now about 1:10 or higher; similar ratios are being seen farther eastward now -- as Sachems continue to decline and Fieries continue to increase.

FLIGHT PERIOD: Probably three broods, but the first is a relatively small one. The first brood downstate is from early April to late May or early June, and in the Mountains from late April to mid-June. There are apparently two large and overlapping broods downstate from mid-June to early November, and from early July to early November in the Mountains. This is one of the few skippers that is common in the Piedmont from late June to mid-July, when most other grass skippers are between broods.

HABITAT: This is one of the most "urban" of skippers, almost always seen in places strongly impacted by man. Favored habitats are gardens, vacant lots, fields, roadsides, and clearcuts. It can be numerous along wooded borders and powerline clearings, but it typically favors areas of full sun.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: The foodplants are mostly weedy grasses such as crabgrasses (*Digitaria* spp.) and Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). The species nectars on a wide variety of flowers, including garden species such as butterfly-bush (*Buddleja* spp.).

COMMENTS: The Sachem is one of the most often seen butterflies around gardens and weedy places in the Piedmont and Mountains. Beginning butterflies likely will be confused by the species; I was for the first year! The male has a dull orange underside with some subtle brown to sooty patches, but the very large black stigma on the bright orange upper fore wing clinches the identification. The female's underside shows a chevron like many of the *Hesperia* skippers, which are often targets of the butterflies. (*Hesperia* species do not occur in gardens or other urban areas.) Not surprisingly, many of the photos I receive of potential *Hesperia* skippers, such as Leonard's, Meske's, and Indian, turn out to be female Sachems.

In 2023, there was a split of the Sachem into a Western and an Eastern set of species. The Western retains the name of *Atalopedes campestris*; the Eastern now becomes *Atalopedes huron*, following Pelham's (2023) checklist. A few websites give our "new" Sachem a common name of Huron Sachem, though the Butterflies of America website -- which our website generally follows -- retains just Sachem for ours and the name of Casachem for the Western species.