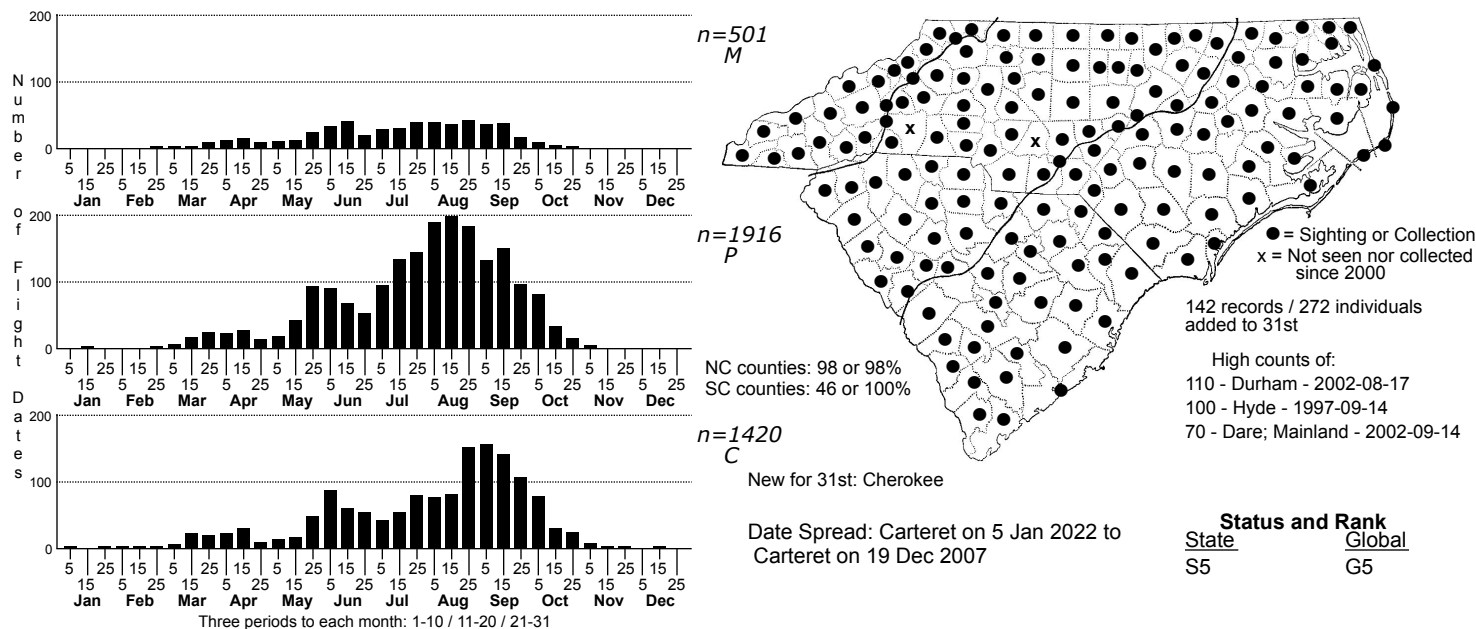


Gray Hairstreak *Strymon melinus*



DISTRIBUTION: Statewide; undoubtedly occurring in all NC counties.

ABUNDANCE: Very widespread and frequently seen; fairly common to common in the Coastal Plain and eastern Piedmont; fairly common in the western Piedmont and Mountains. More numerous in eastern NC than in western NC.

FLIGHT PERIOD: At least three broods, but with no true gaps (i.e., periods of local absence) between the flights. The broods occur between mid-March and late October, very rarely into November in the Coastal Plain; the first brood is small, as numbers are not usually seen until late May, and the species often is not common until July.

HABITAT: Extremely widespread. It typically favors dry, sunny places. It may be found along woodland borders, powerline clearings, old fields, savannas, and vacant lots; it is most numerous in sandy places with scattered vegetation, such as coastal dunes and fields in the Sandhills. It is not likely to be found in shade, but it may occasionally be found in gardens.

FOOD AND NECTAR PLANTS: A wide variety of foodplants, but legumes (Fabaceae) seem to be most common. Likewise, the list of nectar plants is so numerous that it could fill one or two pages of text.

COMMENTS: This is the most widespread and most frequently encountered hairstreak in NC. One does not often see more than 10 a day, but it can appear almost anywhere one is looking for butterflies. I frequently become excited upon seeing a hairstreak at a distance, as there are so many rare species in NC, only to exclaim "it's just a Gray" upon a closer look.