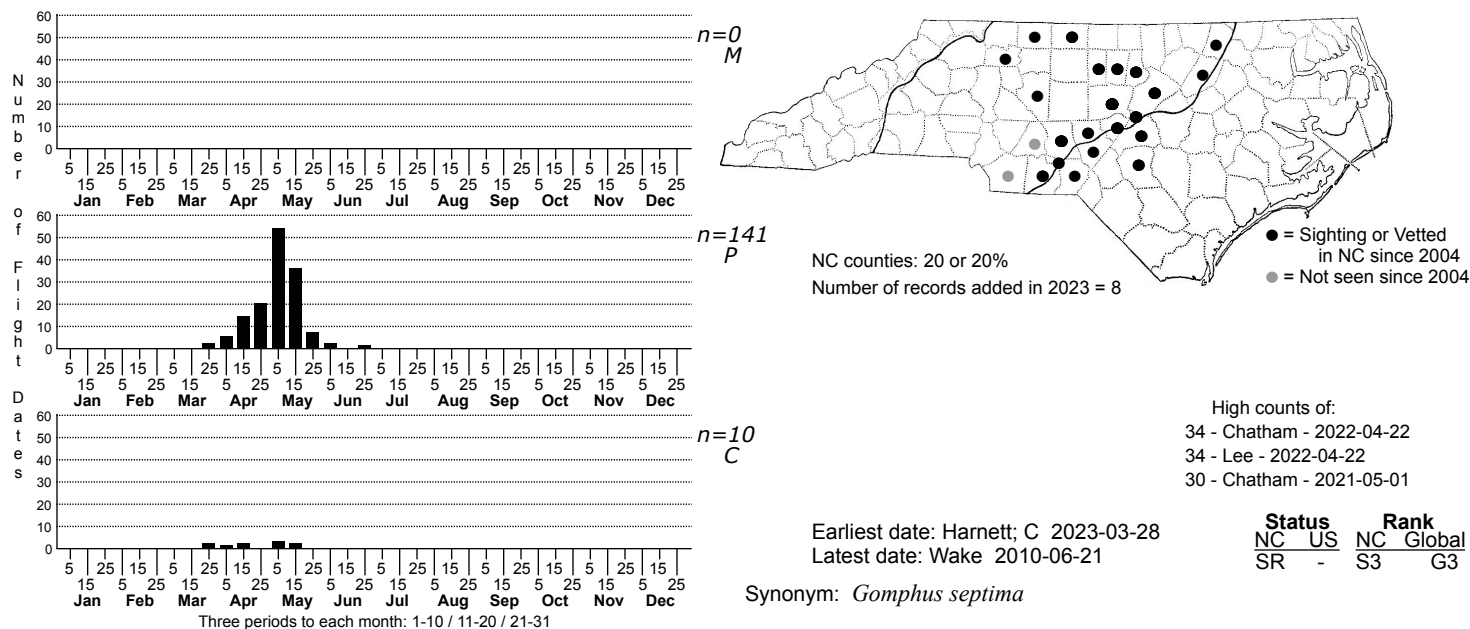


## *Gomphurus septima* Septima's Clubtail



**DISTRIBUTION:** Range has been expanding westward into the central and northwestern Piedmont in recent years, and thus now is present over essentially all of the eastern and central Piedmont, as well as into the upper edge of the Coastal Plain along the Roanoke and Cape Fear rivers. The species has a peculiar, disjunct, or relict range, and so far has been found only in NY, PA, NJ, VA, NC, SC, and AL (according to the OdonataCentral map). Thus, DE, MD, and GA lack records; and it has been found in just two counties each in VA, SC, and AL (OdonataCentral map).

**ABUNDANCE:** Uncommon to locally fairly common, but widespread, within its NC range; noticeably increasing in the past few years -- a true increase in numbers as opposed to just an increase in search effort. Mainly in the Cape Fear River system -- Haw, Rocky, Deep, and the Cape Fear itself. Rare to uncommon in the Yadkin/Pee Dee River system. Rare in the Neuse, Tar, and Roanoke, where so far found only along these rivers (includes the Eno River as the upper end of the Neuse) and not their tributaries; only recently reported from the latter two rivers. Discovered in the Dan River system in spring 2017, but likely rare to very uncommon there.

**FLIGHT:** Very late March or early April to the end of May, and sparingly to mid-June. The peak in numbers is in late April and early May. The flight period has moved forward (earlier) by a week to 10 days over the past decade. Formerly quite rare before very late April, but now with a number of records prior to 20 April, and our new highest one-day count (34) came on 22 April, in 2022.

**HABITAT:** Breeds in clean, fast rivers and very large streams.

**BEHAVIOR:** Males perch on the ground near rivers, but they also perch on rocks in the rivers. For a clubtail, this species is rather easily observed and photographed, as individuals often perch on dirt roads, trails, and other spots away from the rivers.

**COMMENTS:** Until about 30 years ago, the species was known (apparently) only from NC and AL, and presumed to exist only in NC at that time. It has since been found far to the north in NY and NJ. This is, or at least was until about 15 years ago, one of the rarest dragonflies in the eastern United States. It has now been found in 20 counties in NC (new in 2019 in Yadkin and Davidson counties, and new in 2020 in Anson County), with photographic documentation for most of them. As mentioned above, the species is clearly on the increase in the state and is now one of the more readily found clubtails along the larger rivers in the eastern third of the Piedmont. It has recently been re-ranked by NatureServe from G2 to now as G3, and in late 2018 the N. C. Natural Heritage Program changed the State Rank from S2 to S3. (It is hardly in danger of extirpation from NC or extinction over its range now.) Even so, it is still being tracked by that program as Significantly Rare, owing to a small overall global range.