

Phaon Crescent, Mat Plant Crescent, *Phyciodes phaon* (Edwards) (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae)¹

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The Featured Creatures collection provides in-depth profiles of insects, nematodes, arachnids, and other organisms relevant to Florida. These profiles are intended for the use of interested laypersons with some knowledge of biology as well as academic audiences.

Introduction

The phaon crescent, *Phyciodes phaon* (Edwards), is a common southern crescent that frequents moist open areas. It resembles the pearl crescent that is found in the same areas but differs by the more checkered fringe on the wings.



Figure 1. Adult phaon crescent, *Phyciodes phaon* (Edwards).

Credit: Robert Lord Zimlich

Distribution

The phaon crescent is found from coastal North Carolina throughout the southern parts of the Gulf states to southern Texas and westward to southern California. It strays north to Iowa and Nebraska.

Description

The wingspread is 2.3 to 3.2 cm (7/8 to 1 1/4 in). The upper surface of the wings is brown with orange checkered spots and the front wings have a median white to yellowish band (also visible on the undersides). The undersides of the wings are orange and light tan with blackish-brown markings.

Larvae are variable in color from olive to brown with dark subdorsal bands and white lateral bands. Both thoracic and abdominal segments have transverse bands of scoli, each of which bears brown setae.



Figure 2. Larva of phaon crescent, *Phyciodes phaon* (Edwards).

Credit: Jerry F. Butler, UF/IFAS

Life Cycle

There are several flights (early spring to late fall) in the northern part of the range and nearly year-round in peninsular Florida. Males patrol open areas near host plants for females. Mating occurs primarily during mid-day. Eggs are laid in clusters on the undersides of leaves of the fogfruit host plants, *Phyla* (= *Lippia*) spp. (Verbenaceae). The common host throughout much of Florida is turkey tangle fogfruit, *Phyla nodiflora* (L.) Green, also known as capeweed, mat plant, creeping charlie, and match heads.



Figure 3. Turkey tangle fogfruit, *Phyla nodiflora* (L.) Green (Verbenaceae).

Credit: Donald W. Hall, UF/IFAS

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