



# *On The Wing*

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

August 2008

Volume 1, Number 4

## **AUGUST BOARD MEETING TUES., AUG. 26, 6:00PM AT THE TENNESSEE RIVER GARDENS.**

Tennessee Valley NABA officers are requested to meet and discuss finalizing the chapter by-laws an hour before the regular meeting. Contact Bill Haley if you cannot make this meeting. Any local NABA member is welcome to attend this board meeting!

## **AUGUST CHAPTER MEETING TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 7:00PM TENNESSEE RIVER GARDENS**

Our August meeting will be at the Tennessee River Gardens, located along the river on Hwy. 41 near Tiftonia. Mark Lawrence, caretaker for the property, will be our host. Not only is this a beautiful riverside location, they also raise native butterflies in a screened enclosure. We'll be able to tour through this area, as well as take a stroll around the gardens.  
**DIRECTIONS:**

- From Chattanooga, Take I-24 West towards Nashville;
- Take the Lookout Valley exit # 174;
- Turn right (west) on Hwy. 41 (Cummings Hwy.) and proceed approximately 2.5 miles;
- After passing the entrance to Raccoon Mtn. Pumped Storage Facility, continue 2/10 mile on Hwy. 41 and turn right into the entrance to TN River Gardens;
- Entrance is not well-marked. If you reach the small white church on the right, you've gone too far!!!

## ***Mark Your Calendar!***

### **Upcoming September Event:**

**THURS., SEPT. 21:**

#### **Monarch Tagging at TN River Gardens**

Wanda DeWaard, who tags butterflies in the Smokies, has been invited to give a Monarch program at the Tennessee River Gardens. This will be offered as a members program through the Aquarium. She will talk about life history, migration, etc., then people will help her capture, tag and release Monarchs and each person registered for the program will get a milkweed to take home. She works with MonarchWatch, <http://www.monarchwatch.org>.  
(More info on this event in the Sept. newsletter.)



## **NABA SEASONAL BUTTERFLY COUNT! Sat., August 30: 2nd annual Tennessee River Gorge, TN seasonal count**

**Meet: 9:30am at the Bi-Lo parking lot on Signal  
Mountain Road. \$3 NABA fee per counter.**

NABA sponsors seasonal counts outside the traditional June-July 4th of July count period, so our August seasonal count presents a great field opportunity at the end of summer. It will be conducted within the Tennessee River Gorge count circle. Everyone is invited to participate. You do NOT have to be an expert. While it is an all day count, you can come and help for only a couple of hours if you wish. Bring sunblock, drink, snacks and dress for the weather.

Bill Haley is the compiler for this count. If you plan to participate as a separate party within the count circle, please contact him **at least 2-3 days before the count** to be given your survey area. His e-mail is [wgh@tnaqua.org](mailto:wgh@tnaqua.org), work phone is 785-4056, or 1 800 262-0695, ext. 4056, or his home phone is (423) 756-4106.

## **AUGUST FIELD TRIP, FRI., AUG. 22: 8:00-10:00PM, POT POINT FIELD STATION BLACKLIGHTING AT THE POT HOUSE IN THE TENNESSEE RIVER GORGE WITH BUG CLUB**

Here is a great chance to explore the "dark side" of lepidoptera studies...the moths. Join Julia Gregory, Bill Haley and the Tennessee Aquarium's Bug Club kids for a fun evening blacklighting for insects. Try it, you will like it!

## **SEPT. FIELD TRIP, FRI. SEPT. 5: BLACKLIGHTING AT REFLECTION RIDING**

As part of the Bio Blitz (see below), we'll have a couple of blacklight setups at Reflection Riding to discover what flies after dark. This is always a fun activity! (More on this in the Sept. newsletter.)

## **FRI., SEPT. 5 and SAT., SEPT. 6: BIO BLITZ AT REFLECTION RIDING AND THE CHATT. NATURE CENTER!**

Scientists and knowledgeable naturalists from many disciplines will see how many different species they can find within a 24 hour period. This event will start Friday afternoon and end Saturday afternoon. Several Aquarium staff members will be involved in this effort. Bill Haley will need help with butterflies, moths and dragonflies. Contact him if you can help, (423) 785-4056 or [wgh@tnaqua.org](mailto:wgh@tnaqua.org).

SUN., AUG. 10, BAYLOR SCHOOL,  
2:30-4:30PM

Meet at the Signal Mountain Bi-Lo parking lot. We'll see what butterflies are flying at Baylor school. Wear a hat, sun-screen and comfortable walking shoes. *Cancelled if raining.*



TALE OF TWO LADIES

top photo:  
Painted Lady  
*Vanessa cardui*



bottom photo:  
American Lady  
*Vanessa viginienis*



Superficially, these two lady species, both members of the genus *Vanessa*, look very similar. With a little practice and attention to detail, you can find differences in their markings. Perhaps one of the easiest to remember is that the American Lady has "big eyes".

On the underside, look at the eyespots near the outer border of the hindwing. American Lady has two large eyespots, the Painted Lady has several smaller eyespots in a line near the wing's border.

In our area the Painted Lady is somewhat scarce, while the American Lady is much more common. Both have larval host plants readily available locally. The Painted Lady uses thistles, and American Lady uses pussytoes and "rabbit tobacco".

Painted Lady caterpillars can be ordered from Carolina Biological Supply Company and are often available to science classes as a project for school children to raise. They are shipped with a brownish paste to use as food, and the caterpillars eat it. Possibly nutritious, but a far cry from their natural host plants! When you think of the number raised in area schools and then released, it is somewhat curious that we don't see more Painted Ladies. Perhaps this indicates not many survive in the wild once released from school science projects?

Catoosa-Whitfield Co., GA count report:

Catoosa-Whitfield County, GA, the fourth local count of this 4th of July count season was conducted Saturday, July 12. Bill Haley, Libby Wolfe and David Spicer participated. The day started sunny and hot and butterfly action was brisk. Thunderstorms interrupted the counting briefly in the afternoon, but the sun made a comeback and the count continued until 4:30pm.

The most notable sighting of the day was five Harvesters found in one area near a creek. This was a few minutes before the thunderstorm struck. If not for this, there may have been even more found. One or two Harvesters is cause for celebration on any count. Five set a new one-day record!

Ten Checkered Whites were seen at our first stop. This species is usually less common than Cabbage White, which wasn't found all day! Another field yielded a Swarthy Skipper and 7 Common Wood Nymphs. Sachems (211) and Eastern Tailed Blues (207) were the most common butterflies that day. Swallowtails were scarce, with only 3 species found .

Species and number of individuals:

Pipeline Swallowtail 1, Black Sw. 5, E. Tiger Sw. 6, Checkered White 10, Clouded Sulphur 2, Orange Su. 36, Cloudless Su. 1, Harvester 5, American Copper 1, Gray Hairstreak 4, Red-banded Ha. 5, E. Tailed Blue 207, 'Summer' Spring Azure 4, American Snout 2, Gulf Fritillary 8, Variegated Fr. 31, Great Spangled Fr. 1, Silvery Checkerspot 4, Pearl Crescent 28, Eastern Comma 1, American Lady 9, Common Buckeye 66, Red-spotted Purple 2, Carolina Satyr 1, Little Wood Sa. 2, Common Wood Nymph 1, Monarch 1, Viceroy 1, Hackberry Emperor 2, Carolina Satyr 25, Common Wood Nymph 9, Silver-spotted Skipper 1, Hoary Edge 1, Southern Cloudywing 20, Horace's Duskywing 1, Common Checkered Sk. 2, Swarthy Sk. 1, Clouded Sk. 1, Least Sk. 4, Fiery Sk. 4, Crossline Sk.1, Little Glassywing 1, Sachem 211, Dun Sk. 1.

**Total: 40 species, 724 individuals.**



Left:  
Checkered White  
*Pontia protodice*

Right:  
Swarthy Skipper  
*Nastra therminier*



All photos this page  
by David Spicer

## Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

### The Value of Experienced Counters on Butterfly Counts

Last month, I discussed "Newcomers Effect", the joys of having inexperienced people on butterfly counts. This month, I figured it was only fair to highlight the value of "old hands" on counts.

The Catoosa-Whitfield, GA and Stevenson, AL counts were a good example. Libby Wolfe, David Spicer, Scott Spicer and Susan Schott, veterans of several previous counts, helped out. The past few years, we have worked hard on our butterfly identification skills and it sure comes in handy each count day!

Take those tough-to-identify skippers for instance. Catoosa-Whitfield: We were at our first stop, minutes into the count. Sachems were on almost every clover head in the first 50 feet of our walk, I commented to David and Libby, "*Our biggest challenge today will be finding skippers that are NOT a Sachem!*" That day Sachems outnumbered all other skippers by a factor of more than ten to one.

At one stop that day I said, "*There should be a Common Wood Nymph here*", and one flew up seconds after the words came out of my mouth.

An American Copper did the same thing. It showed up right after we commented we'd "*found one here last year.*"

Beginning butterfly watchers might wonder what sort of witchcraft or magic is at play to produce a butterfly exactly where someone expects it, but no slight-of-hand is involved. Such statements come from lots of experience searching out butterflies. You see, butterflies are creatures of habit (as well as creatures of habitat). If the habitat stays the same and their host plant is nearby, chances are good that you'll be able to find a species in the same place from year to year.

Here's another example of the value of knowing host plants and what butterflies use them. We were searching a new spot on the Stevenson count and I noticed some Lamb's Quarters plants. First ones I'd seen all day. I told everyone to be on the lookout for Hayhurst's Scallopwing and Common Sootywing. They are both small, dark, spread-winged skippers that use it as a host plant. Within 100 yards we'd found 3 Hayhurst's Scallopwings and one Common Sootywing.

A little study pays big dividends on count day!

### Stevenson, Alabama count report:

David and Scott Spicer, Susan Schott and Bill Haley conducted the Stevenson, AL count on Saturday, July 26. It was obvious that the summer has been very dry in that area and many normally plentiful nectar plants, such as pink clover, orange butterflyweed and thistle, were scarce or not available. A cloudy morning didn't look very promising, but we were pleasantly surprised to discover great butterfly diversity at our first stop. In fact, Stevenson Park was so good that we ended up spending the first three hours there! When you are finding neat butterflies like Least Skippers, Gemmed Satyrs, Northern Pearly-eyes and Harvesters, along with lots of other species, the time goes by quickly. Other areas were equally rewarding throughout the day, and the sun never peeked out a single time until around 3:30pm.

We waited out two severe storms in early afternoon, but the butterflies came out quickly after each rain and we continued adding species. By day's end, we'd tallied 46 species. As always, we missed some usually common species, such as Red-spotted Purple, Clouded Sulphur and Cabbage White.

If you've read my account of the Catoosa-Whitfield, GA count, you noted our good luck with Harvesters. I'm pleased to announce we shattered that old record, finding a total of 12, (*10 at our last stop of the day*).

Following are species found and numbers of individuals.

### Species and number of individuals:

Pipevine Swallowtail 16, Black Sw. 5, Spicebush Sw. 31, E. Tiger Sw. 18, Orange Su. 2, Cloudless Su. 10, Sleepy Orange 70, Harvester 12, Gray Hairstreak 1, Red-banded Ha. 1, E. Tailed Blue 14, 'Summer' Spring Azure 6, Am. Snout 1, Gulf Fritillary 1, Variegated Fr. 11, Silvery Checkerspot 3, Pearl Crescent 24, Question Mark 3, Eastern Comma 4, American Lady 1, Red Admiral 2, Common Buckeye 12, Viceroy 2, Goatweed Leafwing 1, Hackberry Emperor 23, N. Pearly-Eye 3, S. Pearly-Eye 2, Gemmed Satyr 7, Carolina Satyr 8, Little Wood Sa. 5, Silver-spotted Skipper 45, Hoary Edge 2, S. Cloudywing 1, Hayhurst's Scallopwing 3, Horace's Duskywing 1, Com. Checkered Sk. 2, Common Sootywing 1, Clouded Sk. 14, Least Sk. 12, Fiery Sk. 3, Crossline Sk. 2, Sachem 8, Zabulon Sk. 6, Dun Sk. 3, Lace-winged Roadside Sk. 3, Ocola Sk. 1.

**Total: 45 species, 398 individuals.**

### Ocoee, TN count report:

Carl Swafford, Beverly Swafford, Jeff Basham, Stephen Johnson, David Spicer and Scott Spicer conducted the Ocoee, TN butterfly count July 19. Carl says, "*Overall, we had a 'good day'. We have had better days. I think the problem was the absence of nectaring plants and the fact this end of Polk County did not get any rain during June. We missed key species, especially in the hairstreaks and skippers.*"

They ended with 49 species. Notable finds were: Giant Swallowtail, Harvester, American Copper, Diana Fritillary, Creole Pearly-Eye, Appalachian Brown, Long-tailed Skipper, Golden-banded Skipper and Yehl Skipper.

(-cont. pg. 4)

**HAVE YOU SEEN THESE BUTTERFLIES?**

One goal of forming a NABA butterfly chapter in the Chattanooga area was to promote an increased number of educated observers to document local butterfly populations.

Featured on this page are photos (*opposite*) of a butterfly species that could be considered quite uncommon, possibly rare, in Hamilton County, TN. Bill Haley discovered a very small population in northern Hamilton County by accident several years ago while conducting a bird count. Deborah Beeding took the two photos of a Baltimore Checkerspot, *Euphydryas phaeton*, in early May of this year at this site. Currently, it is the only known population of the Baltimore Checkerspot in Hamilton County.

Intensive agriculture is carried on within 10 feet of this population, with herbicides used every spring to control weeds in the no-plow planting method used. Because of this the one population we know of could be vulnerable. Wind blowing in the wrong direction could damage host plants the caterpillars need for food.

Baltimore Checkerspots are very attractive and distinctively marked medium-sized butterflies. They frequent wet streamside or swampy areas and their host plant is turtlehead or English plantain.

There may be other populations that have gone undiscovered. Bill found a single individual atop Bakewell Mountain, a few miles away from this population, several years ago. So far they have only been seen in May, and according to the book, there is only one brood annually. Be on the lookout. You may be the next one to make a significant discovery!

Another species of concern is the American Copper (photo right). This beautiful little butterfly, while not rare, is certainly uncommon in this area. Currently no populations are known in Hamilton County. The populations that have been documented in the past were victims of habitat loss when the fields they inhabited were developed or cut at the wrong time. Larval host plant is sheep sorrel, a common weed. Look for the American Copper in open fields, especially ones with their host plant, sheep sorrel, and some nectar plants. This species is probably more widespread than is currently known, so hopefully our chapter members will be able to document some new colonies in the area!



Baltimore Checkerspot, dorsal view



Baltimore Checkerspot, ventral view

**Did You Identify the “Mystery Swallowtail” at the Top of Pg. 1 of the June Newsletter?**

It is the dark color form of the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail. Dark phase Tiger Swallowtails are *always* females. Females also come in the light form, yellow with black stripes, familiar to most folks.

**Ocoee, TN count report (cont. from pg. 3);**

**Species found and number of individuals:**

Pipevine Swallowtail 4, Black Sw. 1, Giant Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 24, Spicebush Sw. 14, Checkered White 1, Cabbage Wh. 2, Clouded Sulphur 1, Orange Su. 4, Cloudless Su. 3, Harvester 1, Am. Copper 2, Gray Hairstreak 4, Red-banded Ha. 64, E. Tailed Blue 97, ‘Summer’ Spring Azure 28, Am. Snout 4, Variegated Fritillary 35, Diana Fr. 2, Gr. Spangled Fr. 10, Silvery Checkerspot 42, Pearl Crescent 47, Eastern Comma 3, Am. Lady 3, Red Admiral 2, Com. Buckeye 140, Red-spotted Purple 5, Hackberry Emperor 5, N. Pearly-Eye 3, Creole Pearly-Eye 2, Appalachian Brown 1, Carolina Satyr 29, Monarch 1, Silver-spotted Skipper 82, Long-tailed Sk. 1, Golden-banded Sk. 1, Hoary Edge 8, Zarucco Duskywing 2, Wild Indigo Du. 22, Com. Checkered Sk. 10, Com. Sootywing 3, Clouded Sk. 44, Least Sk. 5, Fiery Sk. 7, Little Glassywing 1, Sachus 360, Delaware Sk. 1, Yehl Sk. 1, Dun Sk. 1, Hairstreak sp. 1, Pearly-Eye sp. 1, Skipper sp. 2. **Total: 49 species, 1136 individuals.**

**CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE SPIDER AT THE TOP OF PG. 1?**

This large, beautiful spider of late summer frequently dines on butterflies! Can you ID it? *Photo by David Spicer.*



Harvester, *Feniseca tarquinius*

Here is a little butterfly that has caused quite a stir in 2008! Some years it is exceedingly difficult to find even one. On this summer's counts we have located more Harvesters than ever, with multiple individuals being seen at once on several occasions. There must be a good crop of wooly aphids on alder and beech trees this year! Harvesters are usually found near woodland edges or along wooded roads, especially near water.

In Jeff Glassberg's Butterflies Through Binoculars he says, "Harvesters are our only butterflies with carnivorous caterpillars. The caterpillars feed on other insects (wooly aphids) rather than on plants. Adults can sometimes be found sunning themselves in woodland glades in the late afternoon. Usually quite rare and a good find, this species occasionally undergoes population irruptions. It's closest relatives live in Africa."



Harvester, dorsal view

The photo above shows a rare view of the topside of a Harvester. These butterflies almost always land with wings closed, as in the top photo, but just as Jeff Glassberg states, this photo was taken late in the day and we saw this little guy sunning himself on a leaf a bit above head-high. He was enjoying his siesta so much we were able to carefully bend the branch down so David could get this shot.



Goatweed Leafwing, *Anaea andria*

This butterfly is another one on most people's "Most Wanted List". Any time one is found is a great day for butterfly watchers. Ordinarily very uncommon, they are a stunner, especially the males, which are more brightly colored. Check out the photo below to see the upperside of a beautiful male Goatweed Leafwing Scott and David Spicer found in Stevenson, AL.



Goatweed Leafwing, dorsal view



Viceroy, *Limenitis archippus*  
Well-known Monarch mimic, the Viceroy.

Additional photos from the Stevenson, Alabama butterfly count

All photos this page courtesy of Scott and David Spicer. Clockwise from top left: Black Swallowtail, Cloudless Sulphur, Spicebush Swallowtail, Silvery Checkerspot, Least Skipper, Common Sootywing, Gemmed Satyr, Sleepy Orange.

