



Photo by Jeff Basham

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

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**YOU ARE INVITED:
MARCH MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 7:00PM
TENNESSEE AQUARIUM
DISCOVERY CLASSROOM**

A PRIMER ON LOCAL MOTHS

Many folks who enjoy butterfly watching occasionally stop to admire day-flying moths visiting the same flowers. Or perhaps you've noticed the intricate wing patterns of moths that gather around your porch light. Many of us have been dazzled by the appearance of large silkmoths such as the Luna or Cecropia.

Plan to attend the March meeting to learn more about the "dark side" of the order Lepidoptera. James Adams, long-time moth enthusiast and professor at Dalton State, has agreed to present an introduction to our local moths. Be prepared for an eye-opening experience as the subtle beauty of moths is revealed during his program.

James helped with moth identification during our blacklighting session at last fall's BioBlitz at Reflection Riding. Everyone present was amazed at his identification abilities as he called out the scientific names of moths with a 1/2 inch wingspan (or less), as they flew around the light and landed on the white sheet.

You are sure to leave with a newfound appreciation for these night-flyers. With over 10,000 species found in North America, compared to about 800 species of butterflies, there are a lot to appreciate!

DIRECTIONS: The Discovery Classroom is in the River Journey building on the auditorium level. The building is closed at 7:00pm. Come to the gift shop exit, on the left side of the building as you face the entrance. Someone will be posted there to make sure you get in. Be aware that Aquarium docent training will be underway, so there will be people in the auditorium, which is on the same lower level. The Discovery Classroom can be accessed through the double doors to the left of the auditorium and down the hallway.

MARCH FIELD TRIPS:

**SUN., MARCH 15: TN RIVER GORGE
MEET: 2:30 AT THE BI-LO ON SIGNAL MOUNTAIN RD., LEADER: BILL HALEY, FOR INFO, CALL 756-4106 (H), 785-4056 (W)**
We'll search for early spring species, such as Falcate Orangetip, elfins and Zebra Swallowtail. Cancelled if it is 100% cloudy, raining or temps under 60 degrees.

**SAT., MARCH 28: GEE CREEK
MEET: 11:00AM AT THE WENDY'S HAMBURGERS ON OOLTEWAH-GEORGETOWN RD., LEADER: JEFF BASHAM, CALL 238-6442 FOR INFO.**

We will carpool to the Gee Creek area of Polk County, near the Hiwassee River. I'll take about an hour to get there. While there are no guarantees in early spring, possibilities include: Henry's Elfin, Brown Elfin, Giant Yucca Skipper, Cobweb Skipper, Silvery Blue and Appalachian Tiger Swallowtail. Wear sturdy hiking boots and be prepared to do a bit of hiking to get to some areas. Cancelled if raining, 100% cloudy, or temperature under 60 degrees.

DIRECTIONS: Take I-75N to the Ooltewah Exit #11, turn right. Wendys will be on the left in about a mile.

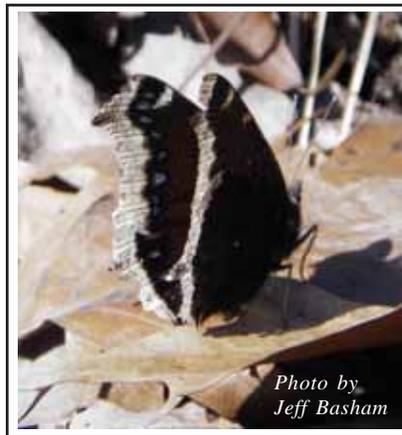


Photo by
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Local
First-of-Year
Butterfly
Sightings

Feb. 1: American Snout, Hamilton Co., Bill Haley
Feb. 7: Mourning Cloak, Polk Co., Jeff Basham
Feb. 9: Mourning Cloak, Hamilton Co., Mark Lawrence
Feb. 11: Question Mark, Bradley Co., Vaughn Trentham
Feb. 12: Mourning Cloak, Catoosa Co, GA, David Hollie
Feb. 26: Orange Sulphur, Hamilton Co., Bill Haley

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

Zebras. In Tennessee?

Early spring is a magical time of rebirth. Woodlands that displayed all their bones in the dreary cold months of winter witness a seasonal renewal. Trees begin to leaf out in myriad pastel shades and forest floors become carpeted with blooms.

Spring ephemerals, wildflowers that take advantage of relatively sunlit, open woods before the onrush of full summer foliage are at their peak in March and early April. Bloodroot, toothwort, hepatica, trillium, wild geranium and a score of others take center stage.

I've always been fascinated by some of the earliest wildflowers which bloom before most pollinators, such as honeybees or bumblebees are stirring. Two that live on the forest floor are the Sessile Trillium, sometimes called Toad Trillium and the Purple Trillium. The blooms of these trilliums are brownish red and are not exactly what you'd consider fragrant. In fact, if you get down really close and conditions are just right, they can sometimes be downright stinky! A couple of very descriptive nicknames for the Purple Trillium are "stinking Benjamin" or "wet dog trillium".

A small tree, usually found along river flood plains or creek bottoms, that also falls into this category is the Common Pawpaw. Blooms the same color and just as stinky to a human nose.

All of them have a unique challenge. They need a strategy to make sure they get pollinated. What they have come up with is interesting. They are the same color as rotting meat and they stink. Guess what likes rotten, stinky meat? Flies, and possibly some beetles! These plants have adopted a different, but successful, pollination scheme.

By now, you are possibly wondering about my headline. How am I going to work Zebras into this story about stinky flowers?

Remember my earlier mention of the Common Pawpaw? Only about a dozen of the 2,300 species in the custard-apple family grow in this country and the Common Pawpaw is one. The large, broad leaves of this unassuming understory tree are highly favored by one butterfly, the Zebra Swallowtail, which is the official Tennessee state butterfly.

The next time you see our gorgeous, long-tailed black and white striped state symbol, you'll know it owes its existence to some fly that once visited the stinky flowers of a Common Pawpaw.

Mark Your Calendar!

BUTTERFLY COUNT DATES FOR 2009

Following are the NABA butterfly count dates that will be compiled by Bill Haley in 2009.

- Sat., April 4: Tennessee River Gorge, TN
(1st annual seasonal spring count)
- Sat., June 13: Tennessee River Gorge, TN
(15th annual 4th of July count)
- Sat., June 20: Soddy-Daisy, TN
(13th annual 4th of July count)
- Sat., June 27: Lookout Mountain, GA
(10th annual 4th of July count)
- Sat., July 18: Catoosa-Whitfield Co., GA
(6th annual 4th of July count)
- Sat., July 25: Stevenson, AL
(7th annual 4th of July count)
- Sat., Aug. 29: Tennessee River Gorge, TN
(3rd annual seasonal fall count)

SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH: WANT TO COUNT BUTTERFLIES, BUT CAN'T STAY OUT ALL DAY?

Participate in a Tennessee Aquarium members' program!

"Spring Butterflies of the TN River Gorge"

Look for spring butterflies in the riverside meadows of the Tennessee River Gorge with educator Bill Haley, president of the Tennessee Valley chapter of the North American Butterfly Association. We'll search for falcate orangetips, pepper and salt skippers and West Virginia whites, all species that can only be found in early spring. Novices are welcome! Add an optional field guide, *Butterflies and Moths*, for \$5.

10:00am-noon. Limited to 25 people.
\$5 TN Aquarium member / \$10 non-member
(Add \$5 for book)
Meet at Pot Point Field Station
Register at www.tnaqua.org/Events/Events_travel.asp
or call (423) 267-FISH beginning Tues., March 3.

ARE FIRST-OF-YEAR SIGHTINGS IMPORTANT?

A recent topic on the butterfly listserve is first sightings of butterflies across Tennessee. In a recent post, Stephen Stedman gave some very valid points on why we need to keep track of such things. His remarks follow.

"Over the past seven butterfly seasons in Putnam County, I have kept records on the first and last dates that I have encountered the butterflies that occur in the county, and a few other folks have assisted by sending along dates that have superseded early and late dates previously accumulated. you can view the early and late dates of appearance for Putnam County butterflies at the page on my website listed below.

(cont. next page, FIRST DATES)

FIRST DATES (cont. from pg. 2):

I am wondering if this kind of information would be good to obtain for other counties in Tennessee and eventually for the entire state. Anyway, if this sort of data-gathering is up your alley, please consider starting and maintaining such a list for your home county. It might be a good project for NABA chapters to engage in.

It should be noted that a list of early and late dates of appearance for butterflies in a county (or state) is really one step along a path to what is really needed, and that is a list of all the dates (over many years) when a species has been reported, not just the earliest and latest dates. With a list of all dates available, it would be possible to plot these dates on a timeline and then to "see" the flight periods of species that have two or more broods each year and exactly when those flight periods take place. Charles Covell's *Lepidoptera of Kentucky* provides this information for the entire state of Kentucky, making it a model of what might be done in Tennessee someday."

Good butterflying, Steve

Link to early and late dates for Putnam County:
<http://iweb.tntech.edu/ssstedman/ButterflyPutnamCo.htm>

CAN YOU IDENTIFY the butterfly pictured on page one? It overwinters as an adult and can be seen in very early spring on warm, sunny days.

Check Out the New Tennessee Butterfly Listserve!

With over 100 subscribers already, the new butterfly listserve is already abuzz with good butterfly information. You'll find out what others across the state are seeing! To subscribe to the Tennessee butterfly listserve, go to the following web address:
<http://www.freelists.org/list/tn-butterflies>.

DIGEST MODE: There are sometimes 20-30 postings a day, and they can quickly fill up your inbox. If you wish to only get one daily e-mail, listing all the posts, you can opt for the digest format. For this option: go to <http://www.freelists.org/list/tn-butterflies> Enter your e-mail address Under "Choose An Action", click on "Turn Digest mode on". Once you join, you can post to the list at: tn-butterflies@freelists.org.

In Honor of Our March Program.....MOTHS



Valentine's Day Moths: Some folks are bugged when moths fly around their porch lights, but not James Adams. He says moths are a bit more active in early spring than butterflies and he sent this photo of his back porch, taken on Valentine's Day, to prove it. His lights attracted a "slew of early spring moths".



BAMONA (Butterflies and Moths of North America) STATE COORDINATORS:

As the butterfly season gets into full swing, you'll probably read in these pages about BAMONA. Since your editor lives in Tennessee, that's the state I tend to talk about. I realize we have members in both Georgia and Alabama, so I don't want to leave you guys out. Go to this website to find out the state BAMONA coordinator in your state. While I'm happy to get your reports, and will frequently use them in this newsletter, you might want to document butterflies in your state with BAMONA as well.

<http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/faq/state>

TENNESSEE VALLEY NABA OFFICERS

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