



Photo by David Hollie

On The Wing

*Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association*

April 2009

Volume 1, Number 12

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

NABA SPRING SEASONAL COUNT **SAT., APRIL 4, 2009** **TENNESSEE RIVER GORGE**

**YOU ARE INVITED:
APRIL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 7:00PM
TENNESSEE AQUARIUM
DISCOVERY CLASSROOM**

BUTTERFLY GARDENING

One aspect of butterfly watching many people enjoy is gardening for butterflies. What better way to attract these small winged jewels for closer viewing than providing both nectar and host plants in your own yard?

For the past 2-3 years, a butterfly garden along the sidewalk beside Riverfront Parkway has been attracting many urban butterflies, as well as lots of butterfly admirers. Located between the River Journey and Ocean Journey buildings at the Tennessee Aquarium, this garden is carefully tended by several Master Gardeners. We've invited them to present our April program.

At last word, one of three people will give the program. They all work on the butterfly garden, so are very qualified to speak to us. It will be either Mike Payne, Tennessee Master Gardener, State Advocate, his wife Stephanie or Dee Clark.

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.

APRIL FIELD TRIP, (Details on page 3)

Our March field trip to Gee Creek in Polk County was rained out. We'll try again on Saturday, April 11. See details and directions on page 3. This trip will be cancelled once again if it rains.

COUNT COMPILER, BILL HALEY (423) 785-4056 (W) OR (423) 756-4106 (H), 326-9248 (cell), wgh@tnaqua.org. **PLEASE CONTACT BILL BEFORE COUNT DAY TO LET HIM KNOW YOU ARE PLANNING TO PARTICIPATE AND BE ASSIGNED AN AREA. AS WITH ALL NABA COUNTS, EACH PARTICIPANT MUST PAY A \$3 FEE TO NABA.**

Help us learn what butterflies can be found in early spring in this area. Our first butterfly count of 2009 will afford a chance to see some butterflies we don't get on summer counts. Possibilities include: Appalachian Tiger Swallowtail, Falcate Orangetip, West Virginia White, elfins (3-4 species), Early Hairstreak, Pepper and Salt Skipper, Juvenal's Duskywing, Sleepy Duskywing and Dreamy Duskywing. Other species will be found as well. If your schedule (or endurance) doesn't allow it, you aren't required to stay the entire day. If you are just a beginner or are unsure of your identification skills, you can accompany a more experienced counter, or register for the program below.

All counters should meet at 9:00am at the Bi-Lo parking lot on Signal Mountain Road (to the left as you enter parking lot) to pay your fee and provide your address for the official count form.

Bill Haley will be leading a Tennessee Aquarium members' program that day as part of our count.

If you want a taste of butterfly counting, you might want to attend this program from 10:00-noon Eastern time in the riverside meadows and pull-offs near the Pot Point Field Station in the Tennessee River Gorge. Afterwards Bill plans to visit other areas in search of butterflies and you are welcome to tag along if you wish. All participants in this program should register and pay beforehand, using the information below.

10am-noon. Limited to 25 people.

\$5 TN Aquarium member, \$10 non-member

Meet at Pot Point Field Station

Register at www.tnaqua.org/Events/Events_travel.asp or call (423) 267-FISH

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

Narrow Window of Opportunity

We have survived another long winter and the uncertainties of early spring weather. Now it is April and things are looking up. Warmer months are ahead, and they will be filled with butterflies.

I'm really excited about our first spring count, which will be conducted within the Tennessee River Gorge count circle on Saturday, April 4. This will be the earliest count we've ever attempted, and that is part of the reason for my excitement. I'm really not sure what to expect, but I'm looking forward to documenting some species with a spring-only flight period which are usually long-gone by the time the June and July counts roll around.

In the parlance of the butterfly world, these species are said to be single brooded. Not only is it good to know where to look for these butterflies, it is good to know WHEN to look for them.

If you seek the Falcate Orangetip in this area, don't wait until May to start looking. You'll most likely be disappointed. They started flying in early March and we will probably see the last adults in flight by mid-to-late April. At that point, they will go into diapause (remember that word?) as a chrysalis until next spring. No more adults in 2009!

Elfins compose another single-brooded group only found in spring months. Some can usually be found by late March and the flight ends by early May. Be on the lookout for these small, brownish butterflies flying low and somewhat sluggishly through the early spring understory.

Knowing the hostplant can mean the difference between success and failure with elfins. The presence of blooming redbud trees should prompt a careful search nearby for Henry's Elfin. Redbud is their larval hostplant in Tennessee. As it's name suggests, the Eastern Pine Elfin can be located around both hard and soft pines. In areas where huckleberry grows, search for the Brown Elfin. Frosted Elfins use several plants, including blue false indigo, rattlebox, and members of the pea family. To date Frosted Elfins have only been documented from one Tennessee county, but are probably more widespread.

Many times elfins can be difficult to locate, but I'm hoping we'll find two or three species on our spring count. Butterfly counts are fun, but they are also about discovery and documentation. I hope you will join us on the first count of 2009!

CURRENT CHAPTER OFFICERS

- President: Bill Haley
- Vice President: Glenda Hood
- Secretary: Julia Gregory
- Treasurer: Jennifer Taylor



NEW OFFICERS NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In our chapter's bylaws, it states that a nominating committee will be selected annually at the March meeting to secure a slate of officers for the upcoming year. The list of officers will be announced in the May newsletter and at the May meeting and voted on at the June meeting. Those on the nominating committee are **Susan Schott, Jennifer Taylor and Bill Haley**. If you are contacted, please consider serving our chapter in the upcoming year as an officer.



MARCH BUTTERFLY SIGHTINGS

*FOY denotes first of year sighting in that county.

March 8: Bill Haley reported a **Cabbage White** near his home in Chattanooga. FOY - Hamilton Co.

March 9: Susan Schott saw a **Clouded Sulphur** near her home in Red Bank. FOY - Hamilton Co.

March 9: Steve Stedman, who recently joined our chapter, spent some time butterflying in Putnam County where he lives. He came up with a nice list: **Zebra Swallowtail, Falcate Orangetip** (both FOY& earliest date ever reported in Putnam Co.), **Clouded Sulphur, Orange Sulphur, azure sp., Question Mark, E. Comma, Mourning Cloak, Goatweed Leafwing.**

March 10: Susan Schott found 5 **Falcate Orangetips** at Reflection Riding. FOY - Hamilton Co.

March 10: David Hollie reported a **Question Mark** from Ringgold, GA.

March 15: Bill Haley found 7 **Falcate Orangetips**, 4 **Orange Sulphur** and 3 **Clouded Sulphur** on Moccasin Bend Road and the Blue Blazes Trail parking area.

March 17: Susan Schott found the following at Reflection Riding in Hamilton Co.: 3 **West Virginia White** (FOY), 6 **Falcate Orangetips** (5 male, 1 female), 2 **Mourning Cloak** (FOY), 3 **azure sp.**, 2 **Clouded Sulphur**.

March 18: Bill Haley found 1 **Falcate Orangetip** and a **Question Mark** near Decatur, TN. FOY- Meigs Co., and an **Orange Sulphur** near Dayton. FOY - Rhea Co..

March 18: Jeff Basham and Stephen Johnson compiled a good list from Polk County (all FOY for that county, as no other reports have come in. Some are also possibly FOY for Tennessee.) 15 **Falcate Orangetip**, 2 **West Virginia White**, 16 **Clouded Sulphur**, 1 **Sleepy Orange**, 2 **Brown Elfin**, 4 **Henry's Elfin**, 22 **azure sp.**, 1 **Common Buckeye**, 2 **Variegated Fritillary**, 1 **Mourning Cloak** and 2 **Eastern Comma**.

March 21: David Hollie reported an **Eastern Tiger Swallowtail** from East Ridge. FOY - Hamilton Co.

- (more on pg. 4)

APRIL FIELD TRIP

SAT., APRIL 11: GEE CREEK, POLK CO. MEET: 10:00AM AT THE WENDY'S HAMBURGERS ON OOLTEWAH-GEORGETOWN RD., LEADER: JEFF BASHAM, CALL 238-6442 FOR INFO.

Our March field trip to Gee Creek was rained out, so Jeff has decided to give it another try in April. Cross your fingers for a nice, warm, sunny day! We'll meet at 10:00am at the Wendy's in Ooltewah, then carpool to the Gee Creek area of Polk County, near the Hiwassee River to search for some uncommon butterflies. Travel time will be about an hour. Some possibilities are: Henry's Elfin, Brown Elfin, Yucca Giant Skipper, Cobweb Skipper, Silvery Blue and Appalachian Tiger Swallowtail. Wear sturdy shoes and be prepared to do a bit of hiking to get to some areas. **DIRECTIONS:** Take I-75N to Exit #11, Ooltewah. Turn right and you'll see Wendy's on the left in about a mile.



Photo by Jeff Basham

Rare photo of the highly elusive Stephen Johnson working on his high wire act while searching for butterflies in Polk County. Stephen and Jeff Basham go to great lengths to find great butterflies! (Areas we visit on the field trip will be a bit less challenging!)



Cobweb Skipper
Hesperia metea

Photo by Jeff Basham

Early Spring Butterflies



Red Admiral
Vanessa atalanta

Photo by Mike O'Brien



Question Mark
Polygonia interrogationis

Photo by David Hollie



Henry's Elfin
Callophrys henrici

Photo by Jeff Basham, 3/18/09

CAN YOU IDENTIFY the butterfly pictured at the top of page one? These photos show both the ventral (bottom) and dorsal (top) sides. **Hint:** It is one of the duskywing species seen only in the spring. The ventral side has the distinctive field mark.

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

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 Butterfly Listserve

To subscribe to the Tennessee butterfly listserve, go to the following web address:

<http://www.freelists.org/list/tn-butterflies>.

DIGEST MODE:

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.



Goatweed Leafwing
Anaea andria

Photo by Ken Childs

EVER WONDER WHY THEY CALL THEM LEAFWINGS? Did you see the butterfly in this photo when you first viewed it? The Goatweed Leafwing is a somewhat uncommon butterfly in this area. This photo by Ken Child is a great example of camouflage coloration.

FOR QUALITY NATIVE PLANTS, INCLUDING MANY BUTTERFLY HOSTPLANTS: SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE AT REFLECTION RIDING
Friday April 3, 9:00-5:00
Saturday, April 4, 9:00-5:00
Sunday, April 5, 1:00-5:00

MARCH BUTTERFLY SIGHTINGS (cont.)

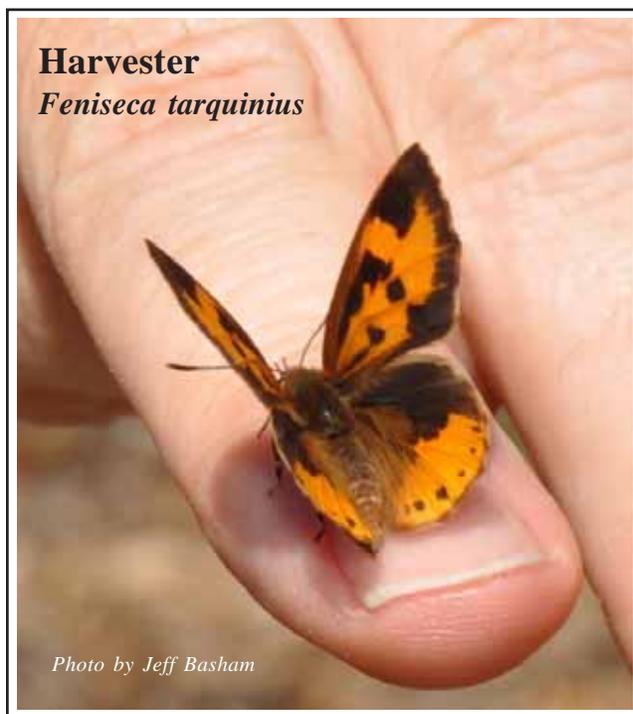
March 21: Jeff Basham and Stephen Johnson spent a memorable day in Polk County. Here is what they saw:

E. Tiger Swallowtail 7, Zebra Swallowtail 12, West Virginia White 2, Falcate Orangetip 35, Clouded Sulphur 105, Orange Sulphur 18, Sleepy Orange 1, Harvester 12 (FOY), Gray Hairstreak 1 (FOY), Henry's Elfin, Brown Elfin, azure sp. 23, Variegated Fritillary 3, Pearl Crescent 1 (FOY), E. Comma 2, Question Mark 4, Juvenal's Duskywing 22, Cobweb Skipper 1 (FOY).

March 21: David and Scott Spicer spent several hours at Red Clay State Historical Park. David says conditions weren't the greatest for butterflies, but they found: Falcate Orangetip (FOY-Bradley Co.), Clouded Sulphur (FOY-Bradley Co.), probable Juvenal's Duskywing and azure species.

March 26: Bill Haley spent some time at Reflection Riding after a morning of rain. He saw: Black Swallowtail 1 (FOY-Hamilton Co.), Falcate Orangetip 23 (9 female), West Virginia White 12, Orange Sulphur 2, Question Mark 1, azure sp. 1, Juvenal's Duskywing 2 (field mark noted on ventral hindwing), duskywing sp. 23. Afterwards, he went to Raccoon Mountain in Marion County and found: Falcate Orangetip 1 (FOY-Marion Co.), azure sp. 2, Clouded Sulphur (FOY-Marion Co.), Pearl Crescent 1 (FOY-Marion Co.), Juvenal's Duskywing 1 (FOY-Marion Co.), duskywing sp. 6.

March 28: In the Tennessee River Gorge, Bill Haley found these butterflies on a cloudy day: Zebra Swallowtail (FOY-Marion Co.), West Virginia White 8 (FOY-Marion Co.), Falcate Orangetip 3, azure sp. 2, and 1 Juvenal's Duskywing .



Harvester
Feniseca tarquinius

Photo by Jeff Basham

BUTTERFLY COUNT DATES FOR 2009

For more information, contact Bill Haley, compiler of these counts, at wgh@tnaqua.org, or you can call him at (423) 756-4106 (H), or (423) 785-4056.

- 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)



MARCH MOTH PROGRAM REPORT: If you missed the March meeting, you missed a real treat! James Adams, a professor and moth expert who teaches at Dalton State, presented an introduction to our local moths. He went over several families of common moths, and some not-so-common. His excellent photos helped illustrate that moths can be just as beautiful as butterflies.

Not only was his program very informative, but he also brought along a live male Luna Moth and a couple of other species he'd found at a gas station the morning of the program. He also had a frame containing many local butterflies and moths for everyone to look at. We really thank James for taking the time to drive up from Calhoun and sharing his love of moths with the group.

James stated he does not mind people sending him moth photos for identification.....just not 50-75 at a time! If you just can't figure out what it is, James may be able to help. His website www.daltonstate.edu/galeps is a great resource with lots of species pictured. James' e-mail address is jadams@daltonstate.edu. He also said the Moth Photographers Group has some good photos to help with identification of moths, especially the spread specimens.

Everyone agreed that our chapter needs to have a field trip later in the year to blacklight for moths. You never know what might come to a blacklight setup!

We were happy to have as visitors Herb and Carol Wolf, a couple from Woodbury, TN, who saw a posting on the tn-butterflies listserve about our meeting. An interest in moths drew them down to Chattanooga.

We encourage all members to attend our meetings. Some really interesting programs are being lined up for this year, so come out and meet your fellow NABA members, and bring a friend.



Grapevine Epimenis is a day-flying early spring moth. What a little beauty! Thanks to Ken Childs for letting us use his excellent photos, taken mid-March.

SINGING THE BLUES

The difficult, (maybe impossible), task of identifying Spring Azure in the field

When talking about identification to species level, you may have heard of the “lumpers” and the “splitters”. Currently many butterflies formerly considered one species are now being looked at more carefully. It seems the splitters are having a field day “splitting” them into new species.

A very good example is the genus *Celastrina*, the blues or azures. If you took a minute to look at the butterfly reports on page 2, you probably noticed a lot of “azure species” listed. Until last year I wouldn’t have hesitated to call them Spring Azure if they were found in springtime, and we called them Summer Azure if they were found during summer, usually after Memorial Day. Nowadays it isn’t that easy, and it may never be that easy again for field observers.

Steve Stedman states, “Azures present a formidable problem for butterflyers these days, as indicated by this passage pirated from the Spring Azure page of the North Carolina Butterflies website:”

Nearly identical to the Summer Azure (Celastrina neglecta), which was formerly lumped with them, these common butterflies (Spring Azures - Celastrina “ladon”) don’t fly during the summer. However, a small number of Summer Azures do fly during the spring, so you can’t assume any spring azure is a Spring Azure. Spring Azures are very similar to Summer Azures, but are slightly smaller and more of a violet-blue above.

Steve continues, “Because of the i.d. difficulty that the spring season azures present, Spring Azure can be added to the county butterfly list at BAMONA based on specimens only.” He adds, “Summer Azure can be added to a county list based on photos obtained from June through the end of the flight period.”

“To err on the side of caution, I usually list spring sightings of azures at my FOY page only as Azure sp.”

To end his message, Steve says, “David Wright has published some fine papers on the *Celastrina* situation in eastern North America, but I am pretty sure that the whole problem has not yet been solved. It is not even clear yet as to how many species of azures there are in eastern North America. ‘Spring Azure’ may actually house several different species.”

Editor’s comment: For some folks, the thought of splitting Spring Azure into several distinct species is exciting. While I understand reasons for this, as someone who enjoys attempting to identify butterflies in the field, I view it with some trepidation. If it isn’t identifiable except as a specimen, we’ll never know WHAT we are looking at in the field. Somehow, azure species just isn’t as satisfying to me personally.

-Bill Haley



From the preceding story, it seems this photo, taken by Tanya Jordan on June 26, is of a Summer Azure, *Celastrina neglecta*.

Need a Gift for a Friend Who Loves Butterflies? Get Them a Membership in NABA, the North American Butterfly Association

The North American Butterfly Association was formed in 1992 by Dr. Jeffrey Glassberg, a scientist, lawyer, former president of the Xerces Society and author of *Butterflies Through Binoculars*, one of the most widely-used butterfly field guides available. It was started to popularize the study of butterflies through observation and identification through use of field marks rather than collecting.

The Tennessee Valley NABA chapter was formed in 2008. The chapter’s territory is centered around southeastern Tennessee, but also encompasses parts of northwestern Georgia and northeastern Alabama. Anyone who joins the national organization within a zip code area beginning with 374, 373 (with the exception of 37355 which is allocated to the Middle Tennessee NABA chapter), 307, 357 or 359 will automatically become a member of the chapter.

It is also possible for persons living outside this zip code area to become a member of the Tennessee Valley chapter. When you join or renew your NABA membership, be sure to specify that you’d like to be affiliated with the Tennessee Valley chapter. Joining online is easy. Go to their website at <http://www.naba.org> and click on Membership. Individual membership is \$30. Family membership is \$40 and an institution/library can join for \$50. It would make a great Mother’s Day gift!