



Photo by David Spicer

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

May 2009

Volume 2, Number 1

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqa.org

MAY FIELD TRIPS

MAY MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 26, 7:00PM
TENNESSEE AQUARIUM
DISCOVERY CLASSROOM

BUTTERFLY TRIP TO SOUTH TEXAS

David Spicer will present our May program featuring butterflies he found on a trip he took earlier this year to South Texas. Although our part of the southeast was still experiencing winter weather when he went, the weather there was sufficiently warm for some nice butterfly sightings. David visited several spots in the Rio Grande Valley, including Aransas NWR and the Padre Island National Seashore.

Since Texas is located right on the border with Mexico, with only the Rio Grande River dividing the countries, it attracts many Central American species that stray across the river and can only be seen in the United States in this very limited geographic area.

Join us and find out what David found on his trip! You might decide you want to make a little visit to South Texas as well. And why don't you bring a friend? You do not have to be a member to attend our NABA meetings.

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.

What Is It?

Here is an easy one. The butterfly pictured at the top of this page is the official Tennessee state butterfly. Many were seen at the recent Seven Islands BioBlitz in Knoxville. What species is it? What is the host plant?

SUNDAY, MAY 3: BLUE BLAZES TRAIL
MEET: 2:30PM AT BLUE BLAZES TRAIL PARKING
LOT ON MOCCASIN BEND. LEADER: BILL HALEY
FOR INFO OR DIRECTIONS CALL (423) 785-4056
(W) OR (423) 756-4106 (H), 326-9248 (cell).

Join Bill for a pleasant Sunday afternoon stroll around the Blue Blazes area of Moccasin Bend in search of butterflies. By early May there should be a good number of species present. Dress for the weather and wear sunblock, a hat and comfortable walking shoes. No sandals or flip-flops please, as we may be walking through weedy areas with some briars. Bug spray is up to you. Cancelled if raining.

TUESDAY, MAY 19: CHECKERSPOT HUNT
IN THE BAKEWELL/SALE CREEK AREA
MEET: 10:00AM AT KANGAROO EXPRESS CON-
VENIENCE STORE IN BAKEWELL. LEADER: BILL
HALEY (SEE CONTACT INFO ABOVE).

Note the day - Tuesday. A mid-week field trip for a change! The Bakewell and Sale Creek area hosts two much-sought-after checkerspot species, the Gorgone Checkerspot and the Baltimore Checkerspot. There is a population of Gorgones on Bakewell Mountain, and one spot to find them is at the base of what Dave Spicer has dubbed "torture hill". At present, only one very small population of Baltimore Checkerspots is known in Hamilton County. We will attempt to find both. We might also look some on the Cumberland Trail. See suggestions for what to wear above. Cancelled if raining.

DIRECTIONS: From Chattanooga, take Hwy. 27 North. Just past Soddy-Daisy you will go across a causeway over Soddy Lake. After you cross the lake the road splits. **Take the righthand split (Hwy. 27N) towards Dayton.** You'll go 2-3 miles. The Kangaroo Express convenience store (*they sell BP brand gas*) is located on the righthand side of the road just before the first traffic light you come to. It is the **ONLY** modern convenience store in the small town of Bakewell. If you get to the school zone sign for North Hamilton Elementary on Hwy. 27, you've gone too far!

NEXT BUTTERFLY COUNT - SAT., JUNE 13

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

Counting on Spring

Scheduling a spring butterfly count can be somewhat nerve-wracking. Should you gamble and go for an early date or wait a few weeks? You never know whether the first weekend of April will feature mild spring weather, or if it will be the heart of dogwood winter and 40 degrees with a blustery north wind. (Remember our early April freeze last year?) To heighten the level of uncertainty, tie in the fact we've had an abundance of rain this spring, when showers seem to hit every other day. Sometimes you have to pick a date and keep your fingers crossed and hope.

Sometimes things work out. Saturday, April 4 dawned clear and a bit cool, but the weathermen were predicting temperatures into the low 70's. This is plenty warm enough to encourage butterflies to fly, and so it was a go for the first annual Tennessee River Gorge spring seasonal butterfly count.

Nine people took part in this count. David Spicer and Scott Spicer covered the western side of the count circle on Suck Creek Mtn. and in the Sequatchie Valley. Susan Schott and Harold Birch covered the Reflection Riding area.

Yours truly covered the Tennessee River Gorge, Blue Blazes Trail area and Raccoon Mountain.

I was joined by a delightful group of folks in the River Gorge. Susan Westmoreland, Becky Jones, Gwen Brymer and John Dever were participants in a Tennessee Aquarium members' program and they helped me look for butterflies in that area. What a thrill it was to be able to show them Zebra Swallowtails, Pipevine Swallowtails, West Virginia Whites and Falcate Orangetips.

After a slow start due to the morning's coolness, they were even excited with our first butterfly of the day, a Juvenal's Duskywing, which I netted and put it in the bug viewer for up close looks at the distinctive field mark.

There are many large Beech trees along the river and I showed them a photo of an Early Hairstreak, informing them we'd all be "famous" if we could luck up and find one puddling along a riverside pull-off. I even had a "designated photographer" to record the moment. Unfortunately, any Early Hairstreak that might have been around failed to show.

We ended the day with 24 total species. Not bad for early April, and a good start for 2009.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT: SLATE OF OFFICERS, 2009-2010

The nominating committee of Susan Schott, Jennifer Taylor and Bill Haley have come up with a proposed slate of Tennessee Valley NABA officers, whose one-year terms will begin in June 2009. If any member of our chapter wishes to nominate someone else for any of these positions, you are encouraged to do so by contacting Bill Haley at (423) 785-4056, or e-mail at wgh@tnaqua.org. The final vote for officers will take place at our regular June meeting.

PROPOSED SLATE OF OFFICERS

- President: Bill Haley
- Vice President: David Spicer
- Secretary: Lisa Lemza
- Treasurer: Jennifer Taylor



1st Annual Tennessee River Gorge Spring Seasonal Butterfly Count

- Pipevine Swallowtail - 23
- Zebra Swallowtail - 9
- Spicebush Swallowtail - 2
- Eastern Tiger Swallowtail - 19
- West Virginia White - 41
- Falcate Orangetip - 62
- Clouded Sulphur - 32
- Orange Sulphur - 15
- Red-banded Hairstreak - 1
- Eastern Tailed Blue - 27
- Azure sp. (prob. Spring Azure) - 14
- Variiegated Fritillary - 2
- Pearl Crescent - 9
- Question Mark - 7
- Eastern Comma - 2
- Mourning Cloak - 7
- American Lady - 2
- Painted Lady - 2
- Gemmed Satyr - 1
- Silver-spotted Skipper - 3
- Sleepy Duskywing - 1
- Juvenal's Duskywing - 97
- Horace's Duskywing - 2
- Duskywing sp. - 128
- Pepper and Salt Skipper - 6

TOTAL: 24 species, 512 individuals

Blitzed!!!!

Butterflying at the First Annual Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge BioBlitz

The first annual Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge BioBlitz was held on April 17-18, 2009. The goal of a BioBlitz is for teams to find as many different species of plants and animals as possible within a 24 hour period. Counting commenced at 3pm Friday and ended at 3pm Saturday. We were blessed with two very nice sunny days with temperatures into the 70's both afternoons.

I was asked by David Trently, one of the organizers, to survey butterflies on this 360 acre refuge in Knox County, a short distance north of Knoxville, TN. The refuge is a peninsula located at Kelly Bend on the French Broad River. It is former farmland, so there are lots of open field habitats. There are also some nice forested areas on hillsides, a large constructed wetland, a wooded pond and nice riparian areas near the river. Many of the fields have been restored to native warm-season grasses and many trees and shrubs have been planted that in time will provide wonderful habitat. This refuge is only eight years old. It is obvious it will only get better with time. I'll be back next year!

On the map, Seven Islands looks quite similar to the Moccasin Bend area in Chattanooga. However, it lacks a busy, and very noisy, interstate highway and railroad directly across the river. The noise level is probably more important for birders, but the quiet country setting enriches the experience for all. It is also far enough away from Knoxville's light pollution that the star gazing was wonderful on the clear Friday night when we stayed up late to blacklight for insects.

Susan Schott and I drove up from Chattanooga, but we had help from other good butterfly people: Audrey Hoff (Knoxville), Richard Connors (Nashville), Tom Howe (upper E. TN), Ed LeGrand (Crossville), Dolly Ann Myers (Knoxville) and David Trently (Knoxville).

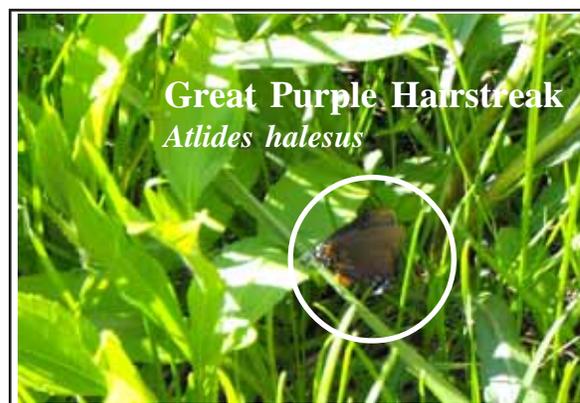
A total of 22 species of butterflies were found during the event. We managed to add six species to the 51 already on the refuge list: Juvenal's Duskywing, Great Purple Hairstreak, Juniper Hairstreak, Henry's Elfin, Mourning Cloak and Gemmed Satyr.

It was amazing to find 25 Zebra Swallowtails. They were everywhere! Juniper Hairstreaks were found along a ridge with a good growth of red cedars. Henry's Elfins were also found along this same ridge. The Great Purple Hairstreak was located with PDL (Pure Dumb Luck). It flew down from somewhere and landed in the grass about 10 feet from me. Luckily Susan managed to get one good shot before it flew. The lone Gemmed Satyr was found in a grassy area very near the French Broad River. (A Prothonotary Warbler was seen there as well.)

- Bill Haley

Seven Islands BioBlitz species totals:

Zebra Swallowtail - 25
 Black Swallowtail - 1
 West Virginia White - 2
 Falcate Orangetip - 5
 Clouded Sulphur - 4
 Orange Sulphur - 15
 Great Purple Hairstreak - 1
 'Olive' Juniper Hairstreak - 4
 Henry's Elfin - 3
 E. Tailed Blue - 15
 Azure sp. 1
 Pearl Crescent - 12
 Question Mark - 1
 Mourning Cloak - 2
 American Lady - 1
 Painted Lady - 5
 Gemmed Satyr - 1
 Monarch - 12
 Silver-spotted Skipper - 1
 Southern Cloudywing - 1
 Juvenal's Duskywing - 2
 Horace's Duskywing - 2



Great Purple Hairstreak
Atlides halesus

Photo by Susan Schott



West Virginia White
Pieris virginiensis

Photo by Carol Wolf

BUTTERFLY PHOTOS FROM THE 1ST ANNUAL RIVER GORGE SPRING COUNT:

OTHER THINGS SEEN AT SEVEN ISLANDS WILDLIFE REFUGE BIOBLITZ



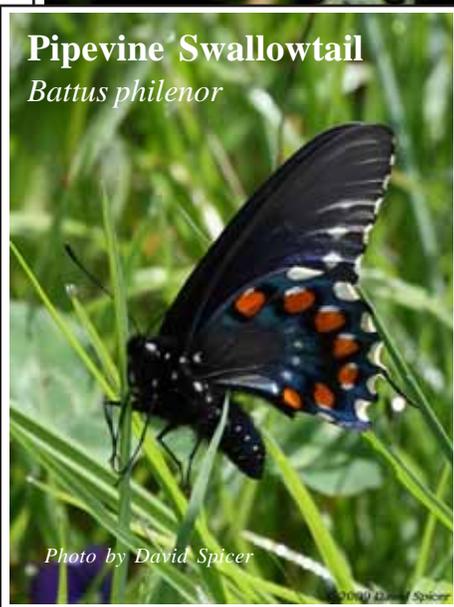
Eastern Tailed Blue
Everes comyntas

Photo by David Spicer



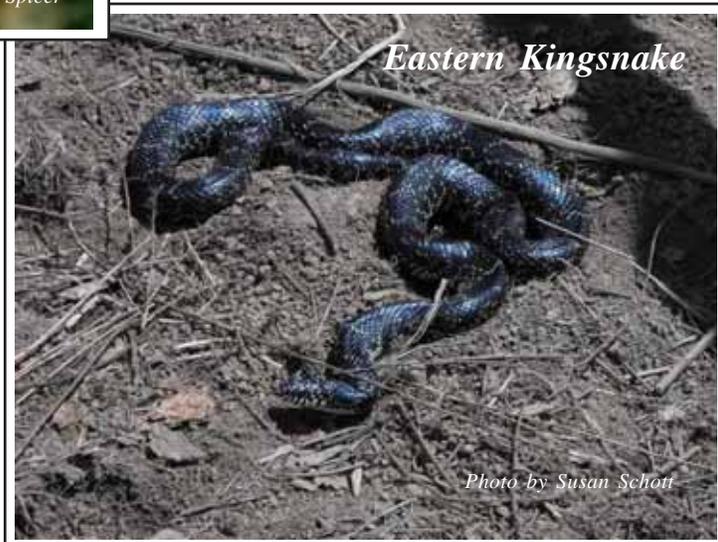
Bird Banding -
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
(male)

Photo by Susan Schott



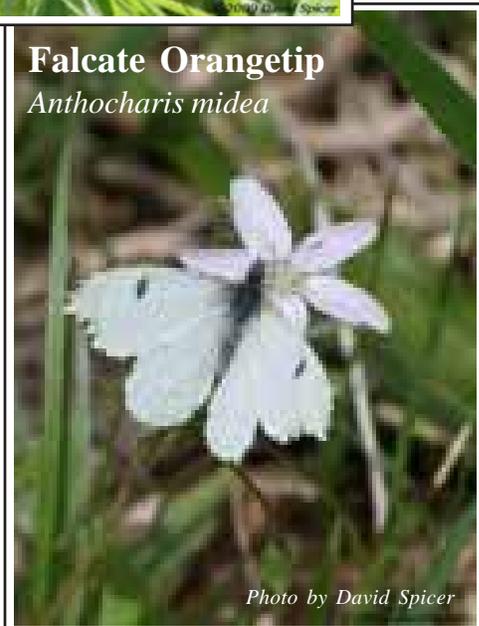
Pipevine Swallowtail
Battus philenor

Photo by David Spicer



Eastern Kingsnake

Photo by Susan Schott



Falcate Orangetip
Anthocharis midea

Photo by David Spicer

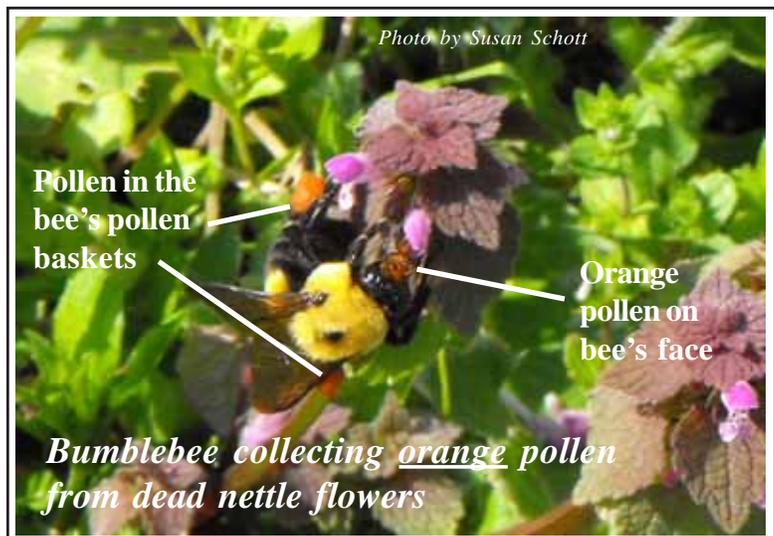


Photo by Susan Schott

Pollen in the
bee's pollen
baskets

Orange
pollen on
bee's face

Bumblebee collecting orange pollen
from dead nettle flowers

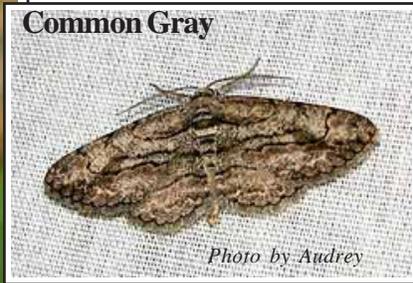
Most pollen is yellow, but not dead nettle pollen. We discovered during the BioBlitz that all the bumblebees visiting dead nettle flowers had bright "Tennessee orange" pollen in the special pollen baskets on their back legs.

More photos - Seven Islands BioBlitz



Flower Longhorn Beetle

Photo by Audrey Hoff



Common Gray

Photo by Audrey



Photo by Susan Schott

Right: Bill Haley transfers a netted Henry's Elfin into the "observation jar" so everyone can get a good look.



Eight-spotted Forester
Alypia octomaculata



Close-up of orange legs

Eight-spotted Forester

The Eight-spotted Forester, a very beautiful small moth, took a liking to Bill. It flew up and perched for everyone to get some photos. Note the fuzzy upper legs....and no, it did not get the color from visiting flowers of dead nettle like the bumblebees...the legs are naturally bright orange.

- Photos by Audrey Hoff

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., 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)

APOLOGIES for not including recent sightings this month. As I was finishing up the newsletter at the last minute (as usual), the e-mail system went down and I could not access your records.

- Editor

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 north-eastern 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!