



Photo by Mike O'Brien

# On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

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**SEPTEMBER MEETING  
TUESDAY, SEPT. 22, 7:00PM  
BUTTERFLIES OF MEXICO AND  
COSTA RICA  
NEW MEETING PLACE!  
OUTDOOR CHATTANOOGA AT  
COOLIDGE PARK IN  
NORTH CHATTANOOGA**

James Adams will present our September program on butterflies of Mexico and Cost Rica, featuring photos he has taken during his adventures. He figured since we will be getting cooler weather soon, a dose of the tropics might be a good idea. Some of you got to meet James at the blacklighting following our August meeting, and know he is really knowledgeable about moths. Now you'll find out that he is pretty good with butterflies as well!

**NOTE:** We will be meeting at Outdoor Chattanooga's new facility in North Chattanooga. This will become our regular NABA meeting location.

**DIRECTIONS:**

**If coming on interstate from south, west or east:**

- Take I-24 to the Downtown Chattanooga/Hwy. 27 exit;
- Cross river on the Olgati Bridge and take the Manufacturer's Road exit. (1st exit after crossing the river).
- Turn right on Manufacturer's Rd.;
- When this road T's into Cherokee Blvd., turn right;
- Go through two traffic lights (Market St. and Walnut Street);
- Turn right at the 3rd light you come to;
- Take the first right, Outdoor Chattanooga will be on the left before you pass under the Walnut Street bridge. (Directly across from Subway sandwich shop).

**If coming from the north on Hwy. 27 South:**

- Take the Manufacturer's Rd. exit, turn left;
- Follow directions above, starting with: - When this road T's.

**"FLUTTERBY WALK", LED BY BILL HALEY,  
WILL BE OFFERED SEPTEMBER 19 AT  
11:30 DURING REFLECTION RIDING'S  
FALL PLANT SALE**

Butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies all make a living fluttering around Reflection Riding. Join Bill Haley in a walk around the Riding to look for fascinating creatures that flutter and fly. Dragons and damsels around the ponds will receive most of our attention, but there will probably be some butterflies and we'll check them out too! This will be an easy walk, so bring your binoculars and meet at the barn entrance for Bill's walk.

While at the Riding, check out the fine native plants being offered at the sale. There are sure to be some plants for the butterfly gardener who is looking for hostplants, such as butterfly weed, swamp milkweed and dutchman's pipe vine. Lots of nectar sources as well.

Guided wildflower walks, "Fabulous Ferns", "Vines For Birds and Vines From the Birds", "Tree Identification", are activities or special programs during the sale.

Admission to Reflection Riding and all activities are free during the fall plant sale, so come out and enjoy a nice mid-September day at Reflection Riding!



Photo by Allan

**WHAT ARE WE?** Both the photo at the top of this page and the one above are moth caterpillars. Each can deliver a painful sting if you brush up against it. Any idea what moths they will become?

## Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

### What Happened?

Mysteries abound in the natural world. One that has puzzled me this year is the extremely low number of Spicebush Swallowtails that have been seen. In the five NABA butterfly counts conducted from April through July, we didn't completely miss this species, but a grand total of only 26 were counted. Not a lot for five day-long events, considering some years this is our most common swallowtail species.

In 2008, I had a couple of very tiny Spicebushes (*Lindera benzoin*) in pots near my front porch. They had Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillars on them all summer long. In fact, the plants were so small and the caterpillars so voracious that as soon as a leaf sprouted, it was eaten. One poor plant died because had no leaves to carry on photosynthesis. Last fall I planted a couple of Spicebushes in my garden, anticipating they'd do well and host lots of hungry caterpillars this year. I'm happy to report the small bushes have flourished. Unfortunately I have yet to see a Spicebush Swallowtail, or a Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar, in my yard in 2009. What is the problem?

Caterpillars of this species dine on both Sassafras and Spicebush. Is a shortage of host plants for the caterpillars making this species uncommon locally? This could certainly be the case in downtown Chattanooga, as I don't see much Sassafras and it is not the right habitat for Spicebush.

Is there some parasite that has experienced a population explosion and now is decimating the species it relies on to complete its life cycle?

Other factors may be at work, such as weather, which can be a severe limiting factor. Did it rain too much or too hard at a vulnerable time in the life cycle of the butterfly? This species overwinters in the chrysalis. Did we get a hard freeze that killed the pupae? Was the winter so mild that butterflies emerged too early in the spring, before there were enough leaves for the new caterpillars to feed on?

There are many questions that might be answered by an attentive observer who can devote a bit of time. A daily, or weekly, weather journal might prove to be a valuable tool in assessing trends in butterfly populations. Many folks across Tennessee have noted that 2009 has been a down year for most butterfly species, but are at a loss to say why. Could YOU find an answer?

## RENAISSANCE PARK AUGUST 14 BUTTERFLY / DRAGONFLY WALK

Bill Haley led a walk around Renaissance Park on Friday, August 14 from 11:00-1:00 for Outdoor Chattanooga. In case you are not familiar with this park, it is on the other side of the Market Street Bridge from very popular Coolidge Park, and directly across the river from the Tennessee Aquarium. Although Renaissance Park is a newer urban park, there are good plantings of flowers with varied habitats to attract butterflies and water features that host many dragonflies and damselflies. More walks will be scheduled here in the future and our totals from this initial effort will be the start of a database for both Coolidge and Renaissance Parks. Five people attended this walk in a beautiful sunny day. We had plenty of butterflies and dragonflies to look at! Species seen are listed below:

### BUTTERFLIES (15 species):

Pipevine Swallowtail, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Cloudless Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, E. Tailed Blue, Gulf Fritillary, Peal Crescent, Common Buckeye, Hackberry Emperor, Carolina Satyr, Monarch, Silver-spotted Skipper, Sachem, Fiery Skipper, Clouded Skipper.

### DRAGONFLIES (10 species):

Prince Baskettail, Halloween Pennant, Swift Setwing, Eastern Pondhawk, Widow Skimmer, Blue Dasher, Wandering Glider, Eastern Amberwing, Common White-tail, Black Saddlebags.

### DAMSELFLIES (1 species):

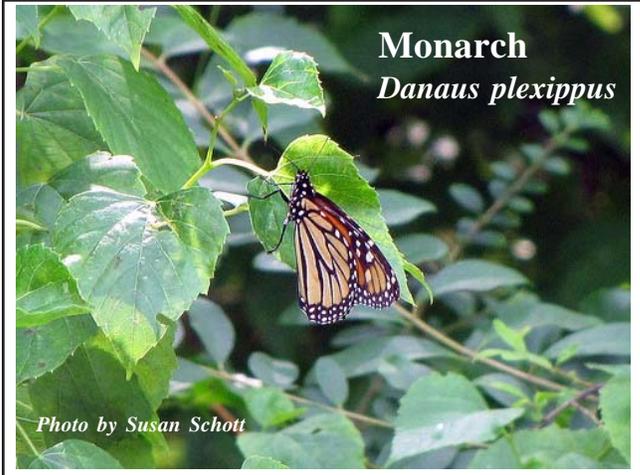
Fragile Forktail.



Photo by Mike O'Brien

Bill Haley netted a male Sachem for everyone to look at. When he attempted to release it from the viewing jar, it didn't want to go. Bill's new "friend" stayed on his fingertip for a couple of minutes.

More Photos from the Renaissance Park Walk



Right: Our intrepid band of butterfly and dragonfly watchers in Renaissance Park.



Above: A beautiful view of the Market Street Bridge and the Tennessee Aquarium, with Lookout Mountain in the background, taken from Renaissance Park.

**Reflection Riding  
Monthly Program / Field Trip  
A Big Success!**

The Tennessee Valley chapter's monthly meeting at Reflection Riding on Friday, August 21 was a great "two-for-one". A record crowd that included folks from Chattanooga, Knoxville, Murfreesboro, Nashville and Valley Head, AL were on hand for the fun. We began the evening with a wonderful program by Richard Connors on dragonflies and damselflies. Several times during the presentation, people had to ask, "How long did it take you to get that shot?" and "How did you get a photo of one in flight?" Yes folks, Richard is a very talented photographer and he got those shots! If you missed this program, you missed some incredible photography and lots of great information about our state's dragonflies and damselflies.

After Richard's program we enjoyed some fine snacks thanks to Julia Gregory and Mike O'Brien before venturing out into the dusk to sample the "dark side" of the lepidoptera world. Several insect eating bats were observed wheeling around the skies near our meeting spot as it got dark.

Julia Gregory and Bill Haley set up blacklight stations in areas near the Humphrey's House. This set up consists of a string or cord from your raised car hood to a nearby tree with a white sheet draped over it. A special ultraviolet light for just this purpose, obtained from the biological supply house, BioQuip, was attached to their car batteries. With help of a clothes pin, the light is hung in front of the sheet. In the growing darkness, the white sheet amplifies the ultraviolet (black) light, and from then on it is a waiting game to see what shows up.

We are lucky to have a NABA member who really knows his moths. Dr. James Adams teaches at Dalton State. James excitedly spouted off Latin names as new moths showed up at the lights. Slipping easily into "teacher mode" he shared fascinating information about the moths we saw and he did it in a very entertaining manner. A "pretty moth" became much more as we listened to James' stories.

We would spend 15-20 minutes at Julia's light then trek 50-75 feet up to Bill's blacklight to see what was new up there. We had a blast looking at every tiny moth and other insect that showed up on the sheets, marvelling at their intricate patterns. Everyone learned something new about our local moths that evening. 11:00 came way too early!

Many thanks to Richard and James for making this such a wonderful evening to learn more about the natural world. Maybe we can do more of these programs /field trips in the future.

**Bad Wing**  
*Dyspteris abortivaria*



**Promiscuous Angle**  
*Macaria promiscuata*



**Black-bordered Lemon**  
*Thioptera nigrofimbria*



**Tulip Tree Beauty**  
*Epimecis hortaria*



All moth photos this page, Susan Schott

Many moth species were seen besides the species above. Here is a partial listing: Common Angle, *Macaria aemulataria*, Common Gray, *Anavitrinella pampinaria*, Esther, *Hypagyrtis esther*, Large Lace-border, *Scopula limboundata*, Nais Tiger, *Apantesis nais*, *Ozarba aeria*, Large Mossy Lithacodia, *Lithacodia muscosula*, Corn Earworm Moth, *Helicoverpa zea*, Common Idia, *Idia aemula*, Spot-edged Dyspyralis, *Dyspyralis puncticosta*, Black Bit, *Celiptera frustulum*, Snowy Urola, *Urola nivalis*, Yellow-fringed Dolichomia, *Dolichomia olinalis*.

### Intermediate Color Form Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

Jeff Basham sent in these photos of an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail to the Tennessee Butterflies listserve. It's color is intermediate between the black form and yellow form. Since all the black forms are female, it is believed that these intermediates are female as well. Jeff commented, "This beauty showed up yesterday in my yard in Hamilton County. I have seen two other individuals in the last two weeks. One of those sightings was in Polk County and one was in Dekalb County, GA. These photos show a rather fresh specimen with good strong yellow shoulderpads. The colors can look quite different from varying angles and different lighting. Sometimes light, sometimes dark, but always beautiful."



### Get in on the butterfly news!

Join the Tennessee Butterfly Listserve to find out what other butterfly-lovers around Tennessee are seeing and doing. To subscribe, go to the following web address:  
<http://www.freelists.org/list/tn-butterflies>

Once you've joined, you can post messages to the list at  
[tn-butterflies@freelists.org](mailto:tn-butterflies@freelists.org)

### Results from the 3rd Annual Tennessee River Gorge fall seasonal butterfly count

Julia Gregory, Libby Wolfe, Mary Randles, Nancy Williams, Harold Birch, Jennifer Taylor, David Spicer, Scott Spicer and Bill Haley took part in the 3rd annual Tennessee River Gorge fall seasonal butterfly count on Saturday, August 29. They enjoyed a partly cloudy day, interrupted by a rain shower in the afternoon. When the rains passed, the butterflies came back out and the counting continued until 6:30pm.

Thanks to rain the two days prior to the count, we found the most individual butterflies of any count this year, many freshly-emerged and in pristine condition.

The Moccasin Bend area was a swarm with butterflies! The Blue Blazes Trail parking lot featured clouds of fresh American Snouts and Tawny and Hackberry Emperors. At one point everyone had at least 2-4 of these friendly butterflies perched on their clothes or hats. Carolina Satyrs and Eastern Tailed Blues were quite abundant as well.

The old radio-control airplane field at Moccasin Bend hosted lots of skippers and Gray Hairstreaks on blooming sneezeweed and lespedeza. It was fun to sort through all the skippers to find anything that wasn't a SACHEM! (We found 12 skipper species there.)

David and Scott Spicer, who split off and surveyed Prentice Cooper and the Sequatchie Valley reported similar experiences, finding over a hundred Common Buckeyes near Ketner's Mill.

We ended the day with 43 species and 1435 individuals. The individuals total is probably conservative, as it was impossible to count all the SACHEMS. Cloudless Sulphurs floated past all day long. It wasn't uncommon to look up while in the airplane field and see 5-6 sulphurs flying past. Since we were mainly looking down, concentrating on the skippers, many sulphurs probably went past uncounted.

**TOTALS:** Pipevine Swallowtail 15, Spicebush Sw. 9, E. Tiger Sw. 17, Orange Sulphur 2, **Cloudless Su. 198**, Sleepy Orange 15, Gray Hairstreak 19, **E. Tailed Blue 193**, Summer Azure 19, Am. Snout 12, Gulf Fritillary 13, Variegated Fr. 25, **Diana Fr. 7 (all female)**, Gr. Spangled Fr. 13, **Pearl Crescent 90**, Question Mark 4, E. Comma 1, **Comm. Buckeye 120**, Red-sp. Purple 16, **Hackberry Emperor 81**, **Tawny Emp. 96**, Creole Pearly-Eye 2, Gemmed Satyr 4, **Carolina Satyr 132**, Comm. Wood Nymph 3, Monarch 12, Silver-sp. Skipper 23, Hoary Edge 2, Horace's Duskywing 2, Clouded Sk. 25, Least Sk. 8, Fiery Sk. 19, Crossline Sk. 3, Tawny-edged Sk. 3, S. Broken-Dash 3, N. Broken-Dash 1, Little Glassywing 4, **SACHEM 185**, Delaware Sk. 2, Zabulon Sk. 13, Dun Sk. 18, Lace-winged Roadside Sk. 2, Ocola Sk. 2. (**43 species, 1435 individuals.**)



**Gray Hairstreak**  
*Strymon malinus*

Photo by Nancy Williams



**Eastern Tailed Blue**  
*Everes comyntas*  
Mated pair

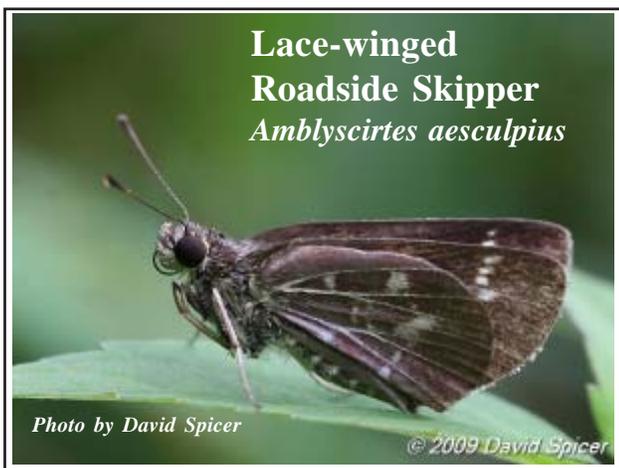
Photo by Nancy Williams

**LESPEDEZA LOVERS!** Lespedeza, sometimes called bush clover, can be a fairly common "weed" in old fields and pastures. Both the Gray Hairstreak and Eastern Tailed Blue use lespedeza as a caterpillar host plant. During the fall Tennessee River Gorge count, the old radio-control airplane field on Moccasin Bend was full of blooming lespedeza, so it was a gold mine for these two species. A number of mating pairs of Eastern Tailed Blues were seen, and we sometimes had 3-4 Gray Hairstreaks on one patch of flowers. The lespedeza blooms were also attractive nectar sources for other butterflies. Skippers of 12 species were seen nectaring on the lespedeza.



**Common Buckeye**  
*Junonia coenia*

Photo by Scott Spicer  
© 2009 Gregory Spicer



**Lace-winged Roadside Skipper**  
*Amblyscirtes aesculpius*

Photo by David Spicer

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**Join NABA, the North American Butterfly Association**

The North American Butterfly Association was started in 1994 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 birthday gift!