



On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

October 2009

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Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

OCTOBER MEETING
TUESDAY, OCT. 27, 7:00PM
BUTTERFLIES OF POLK COUNTY
NEW MEETING PLACE!
OUTDOOR CHATTANOOGA AT
COOLIDGE PARK IN
NORTH CHATTANOOGA

Jeff Basham and Stephen Johnson will present a program featuring some of the noteworthy butterflies they've found in Polk County. Those of you who keep up with the BAMONA Tennessee counties list are aware that Polk County is the first with over 100 species, thanks to Jeff's and Stephen's diligent work. Join us for our last meeting of 2009 to enjoy their beautiful photos and hear about their exploits.

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

IMPORTANT PARKING WARNING: After 4:30 you can park in a space along the street for free.

If you park in a nearby lot, you must pay to park. They WILL give \$11 tickets to folks who park without paying, even in the evenings!!!

DIRECTIONS:

If coming on interstate from south, west or east:

- Take I-24 to the Downtown Chattanooga/Hwy. 27 exit;
- Cross river on the Olgiate 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.

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS OF NORTH AMERICA (BAMONA) TENNESSEE COUNTIES REPORT FROM STEVE STEDMAN

In a recent post to the Tennessee Butterflies list serve, Steve Stedman made a report on submissions of butterfly records across Tennessee, listing all 95 counties. Following his opening paragraph, I've selected counties only from this area to highlight. You can see what the total was in 2008 and what it is now. A number of local counties have added species this year. The most amazing increase is Polk County (see Oct. program). Steve notes that 17 counties did not document any additional species this year. The only one unchanged locally is Grundy. Thanks to everyone who took photos and submitted them to BAMONA. This is one way members of the Tennessee Valley NABA chapter can help contribute valuable information about the distribution of Tennessee's butterflies.

- Editor

The number of documented county records submitted to BAMONA during 2009 has almost equaled the number submitted during 2008, with a little more than a month to go in this year's flight season.

<u>County</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Bledsoe	29	34
Bradley	41	45
Grundy	31	31
Hamilton	80	92
Knox	55	60
Marion	69	72
Meigs	30	34
Polk	66	101
Rhea	24	32
Sequatchie	20	23

Five Tennessee counties - most documented species:

1. Polk - 101 species
2. Hamilton - 92 species
3. Putnam - 87 species (tie)
Davidson - 87 species (tie)
4. Blount - 79 species
5. Chester - 76 species

Total documented species in Tennessee - 136

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

Yellow Blizzard

A few days before the end of September I visited my hawk lookout on Flat Top Mountain in Soddy-Daisy to observe migrating hawks. On this warm, pleasant and cloud-dappled afternoon, the Broad-winged Hawks, having been backed up by bad, rainy weather in the southeastern U.S. for the previous nine days, were streaming through by the hundreds high overhead. It was our best hawk total ever! We finished the day having counted almost 4,000 Broad-wings.

On days such as this, these hawks can easily cover well over a hundred miles, hardly ever having to flap their wings. It is a matter of finding a thermal of rising heated air. Circling ever upward, they soar to the highest altitude possible then pull their wings in and glide across the sky till they find another thermal. Once one is located, they circle up again and repeat the process. The Broad-winged Hawk has a long migration path, leaving the northeast U.S., passing through Tennessee and eventually funneling down through Texas and into Central and South America.

You might think that an animal that migrates over that kind of distance must be extremely tough and persistent to reach their destination. I'm not so sure about the tough part. Truth is, the hawks lay up for any bad weather and don't even try to migrate if the sun isn't out. It's too much work.

I watched another migrant that was active even during the stretch of bad weather. Every time we'd get a respite from the downpour I would notice them visiting flowers in my yard. Large lemon yellow butterflies called Cloudless Sulphur, *Phoebis sennae*, stopped briefly at my flowerbeds for some nectar, then fluttered on, as single-minded in their mission as the hawks would be a week hence. All were traveling in the same southerly direction.

Using a "sun compass" to navigate, they can cover around a dozen miles in a day. They accomplish this even in marginal weather that the hawks disdain. Pound for pound, I think the sulphurs might be tougher! Most only travel to the Gulf coast or Florida, but this is an impressive feat for a "fragile" butterfly with a wingspan of only 2.5 inches.

It seemed to me that this year's "yellow blizzard" from late August to October was even more noteworthy, with larger numbers than usual. Butterflies don't get enough credit. They are tough!

I recently got this e-mail from Harold Sharp, founder of the Riverwalk Bird Club, and wish to present it to NABA members. What do you think? -Editor

RIVERWALK IDEA

Hey Bill;

I enjoyed your story in the morning paper about the butterflies. Here's an idea that I have been thinking about for some time. Look it over and let me know if we could join forces and someday make it happen.

The Riverwalk is controlled by the County Parks and City Parks Departments. We know what a great place it is to bird, we also know it could be made a much greater place for people to enjoy if some City and County officials would listen to birders and others who enjoy things beside walking, running, skating and biking. There's nothing wrong with these activities but the Riverwalk has much more. The City and County just need to listen to us and we can show them how to make it much better.

With TOS and RWBC we have the birders organized. Now with your group the butterflies are getting organized. The local garden clubs have been organized for some time. I'm not aware of wildflower lovers, but I bet we have many, and I know we have several good outdoor photographers. The invention of the digital camera has changed birding more than anything in the past many years. Add the computer and the interest in birding, butterflies, flowers and photography all together and we have a powerful group.

If we organized this group (Birders, Butterflies, Gardeners, Wildflowers, Photographers) then went to the key officials at the City and County Parks Department, we could ask them to let us show how to turn the Riverpark into a showcase for everyone to enjoy.

Here's how: There are several places along the park for nature trails leading off the concrete walkways. Just bushhog a trail through the brush along several ponds and other good bird locations, cover the trail with mulch, post a small sign "Nature Trail" and make it wide enough for the security carts. This can be used by birders, butterflyers, wildflower lovers and photographers or people just looking for nature things.

Next: Select several good locations for small gardens that would be attended by local garden clubs to raise flowers, shrubs, etc., part of which should be stuff that attract birds, bees, butterflies, small animals and things for people to photograph. To make it work, we could have an annual competition to select the best one. This puts the clubs in competition and we can involve all the stores that sell garden supplies, as they would furnish the awards.

- (cont. pg. 3, Riverwalk)

Butterfly Counts, 2009 Wrap-up

Bill Haley compiled a total of seven day-long North American Butterfly Association (NABA) butterfly counts between April and August in 2009. Thirty people participated in these counts. (Many did several.) Their help and expertise is greatly appreciated.

Despite what most butterfly watchers regarded as a down year for butterflies, we managed to find quite a few on the counts! This is a direct result of the counters' dedication and their increasing proficiency at butterfly identification.

One count circle, Tennessee River Gorge, was surveyed three times, April, June and August. This is the most "official" counts NABA allows in one circle yearly. Just in the past three years, NABA has been pushing for more spring and late summer/fall counts. These allow counters to add species with short flight seasons which might not be present on mid-summer counts. The early and late counts are dubbed seasonal counts, while the June-July counts fall into the Fourth of July counts. Fourth of July counts have been conducted for years.

Following are the totals for all counts:

Sat., April 4: Tennessee River Gorge (spring seasonal)
24 species, 514 individuals

Sat., June 13: Tennessee River Gorge, TN
48 species, 981 individuals

Sat., June 20: Soddy-Daisy, TN
35 species, 408 individuals

Sat., June 27: Lookout Mountain, GA
36 species, 287 individuals

Sat., July 18: Catoosa/Whitfield, GA
35 species, 395 individuals

Sat., July 25: Stevenson, AL
36 species, 436 individuals

August 29: Tennessee River Gorge (fall seasonal)
43 species, 1435 individuals

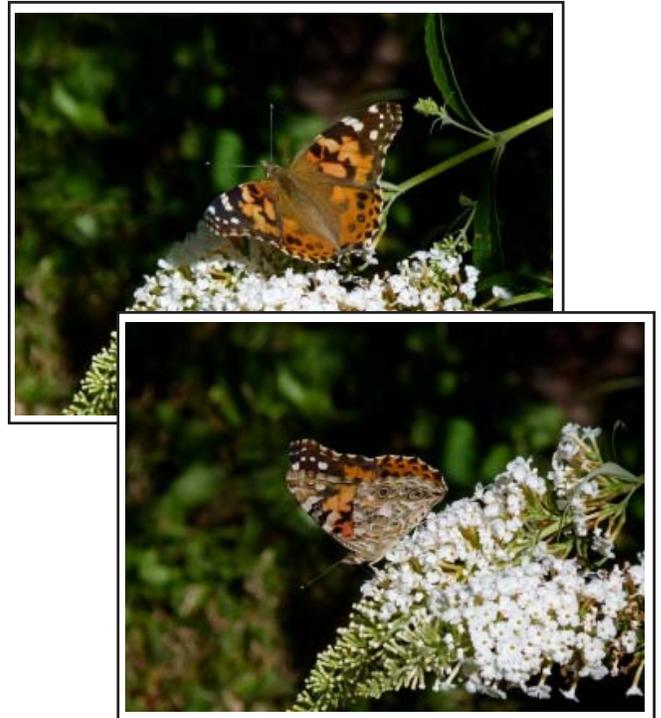
A total of 77 species were tallied on these seven counts. Several possible species managed to give us the slip on all 2009 counts. Misses were Checkered White, Little Yellow, Olive "Juniper" Hairstreak, any of the elfins (spring count), Southern Pearly-Eye, Long-tailed Skipper, Golden-banded Skipper, Dreamy Duskywing (spring count), Peck's Skipper, Dion Skipper, Yehl Skipper, Reversed Roadside Skipper and Common Roadside Skipper.

Riverwalk, cont. from pg. 2

We could also encourage wildflower lovers to plant wildflowers. These gardens would bring the birds, insects and butterflies for everyone to enjoy and photograph. All this together makes Chattanooga a better place to visit if you enjoy any of this.

There are many places for this on the riverwalk. If you are interested in joining me in trying to make it happen, I can get us a golf cart anytime to ride the Riverwalk and talk about it. We just need to get someone's attention at the City and County level and I believe we could do that.

Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui* dorsal and ventral views



Photos by Mike O'Brien

The Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui*, is touted as the most widely distributed butterfly in the world. They breed on all continents except Antarctica, and on many remote islands as well. They have strong migratory abilities and a varied taste in larval host plants. This allows them to spread to far-flung destinations and thrive on the host plants found there.

Biological supply firms ship their caterpillars to schools so students can observe their life cycle. I recently watched a Painted Lady release at Lakeside Academy, where approximately 40-50 adults were turned loose. Despite the fact many are released, they are somewhat uncommon locally. They were found on only three counts out of the seven conducted this year.

- Bill Haley

Some Beautiful Butterflies of 2009

Photo credits
from top:
Jeff Basham
Jeff Basham
Scott Spicer
David Spicer



Coral Hairstreak

Satyrium
titus



Diana
Fritillary
Speyeria diana



Aphrodite
Fritillary
Speyeria aphrodite



Baltimore Checkerspot

SEPTEMBER NABA PROGRAM WAS ALMOST FLOODED OUT! For awhile we weren't sure we'd have our inaugural program at Outdoor Chattanooga. The Tennessee River didn't flood Coolidge Park, but due to several days of heavy rain, floods in East Ridge and Brainerd meant that many more folks were on I-75 from north Georgia. It was *almost* a parking lot. Our program presenter, James Adams, was coming from Calhoun, Georgia, so he got caught in the crunch and arrived 30-40 minutes late. Everyone in attendance was either a Master Gardener or a wanna-be Master Gardener, so we enjoyed talking about gardening while waiting for James.

It was worth the wait, as James gave us a choice - Mexican and Costa Rican butterflies (as advertised) or Lepidopteran defenses. We picked the program about butterfly and moth defenses and it was fascinating! Thanks to James for braving the gridlock on the interstate to present our program!

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

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 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 birthday gift!

Broad-winged Skipper
Poanes viator



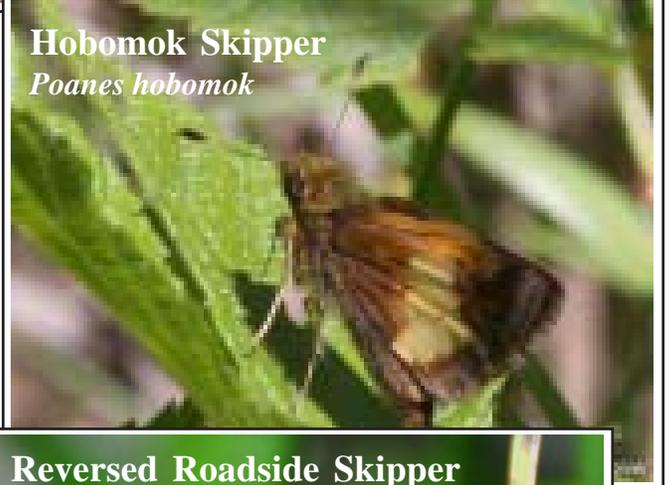
Golden-banded Skipper
Autchton cellus



Dion Skipper
Euphyes dion



Hobomok Skipper
Poanes hobomok



Cobweb Skipper
Hesperia metea



Reversed Roadside Skipper
Amblyscirtes reversa



Tawny-edged Skipper
Polites themistocles



A Bevy of Beautiful Skippers!

Many folks shy away from skipper identification, and they can be a real challenge to others, even with years of experience. They are often among the most rarely-found species, sometimes restricted to very specific habitats or short flight seasons. You'll have to admit some of these butterflies are real lookers.

Photo credits, clockwise from top left: Jeff Basham, Susan Schott, David Spicer, Jeff Basham, David Spicer, Jeff Basham, Jeff Basham

Seasonality of Butterflies

Some butterflies have several broods throughout the flight season. Some have very restricted flight seasons. Here is a look at flight seasons of a few.



American Snout, *Libytheana carinenta*, was the first local butterfly reported in 2009. It overwinters as an adult and several were spotted on February 1st. It has multiple broods, so the flight season can last almost the entire year. They have been seen on Christmas Bird Counts on Dec. 31!



Falcate Orangetip, *Anthocharis midea*, has one brood in early spring. Look for it from late February to very early April. If you miss it then, you'll have to wait for next year.

Another one-brood butterfly, **Henry's Elfin**, *Callophrys henrici*, can be found in woods near redbud, it's larval host plant, while they are in bloom in late March and April.

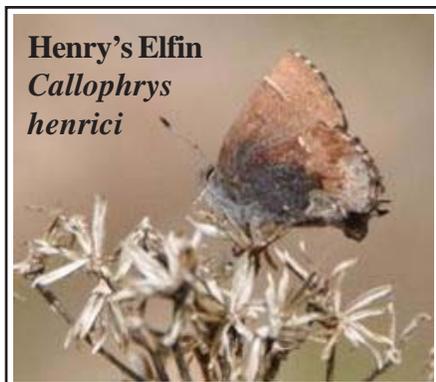


Photo by Jeff Basham



You better look for **Banded Hairstreak**, *Satyrium calanus*, in late May or June. Only one brood annually.



Least Skipper, *Ancyloxypha numitor*, is usually found around the margins of grassy streams. They have several broods annually, so fly most of the summer.

Sleepy Orange, *Eurema nicippe*, in our area is found in very limited numbers in spring and early summer, but populations grow in late summer/early fall, when they become quite common. They actually migrate northward from the Gulf coast each spring to colonize further north.



Photo by Scott Spicer © 2009 David Spicer