

Photo by David Spicer



On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

May 2010

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Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

May Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, May 25, 7:00PM
Tennessee River Gardens

**Bring a finger food - sandwiches,
chips, or dessert to share with
the group!**

The Tennessee River Gardens, located off Hwy. 41, is always a popular NABA meeting spot.

Please bring a finger food for folks to snack on and we'll have a little pot luck meal. Drinks will be furnished.

Afterwards we'll go out for a leisurely walk on the extensive grounds. Mark Lawrence, our host, will also show us the butterfly rearing enclosure where many native butterflies are raised each year. This may be a chance to view some of the other stages of the butterfly life cycle.

The plantings at the Tennessee River Gardens are geared towards attracting butterflies, birds and other creatures. Join us for a pleasant evening along the river. Bring a friend too!

DIRECTIONS:

- Take I-24 West (towards Nashville);
- Take the Hwy. 41 exit, turn right;
- Continue on Hwy. 41 past the TVA Pumped Storage Facility entrance (you'll see a large sign on the right);
- About 200 yards past this you'll turn right at the first driveway you come to (rock gate entrance);
- Take this driveway down the hill and our meeting will take place in the first house you pass on the right.
- Park below this house around the circular drive.

THE ENTRANCE TO TENNESSEE RIVER GARDENS IS **NOT** WELL-MARKED. IF YOU REACH THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH ON THE RIGHT, **TURN AROUND**. YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR!

May Field Trips

MONDAY, MAY 10: NORTH HAMILTON COUNTY, SEARCH FOR EARLY HAIRSTREAK / BALTIMORE CHECKERSPOT
MEET: 10:00am at Kangaroo Express Convenience Store in Bakewell. Leader: Bill Haley. (Call (423) 756-4106 (H) or (423) 326-9248 (cell) or e-mail wgh@tnaqua.org for info.

That's right, we will search an area rich in beech trees, the larval hostplant for the **Early Hairstreak, *Erora laeta***. Bill has never seen one, and he knows of only one other person who has ever seen one...and that was a fleeting in-flight glimpse of one as it flew away. That butterfly had been identified while perched by Jeffrey Glassberg, founder of NABA. This almost mythical species typically is a denizen of the canopy, but sometimes can be found puddling on the ground. If we succeed in finding one, it'll be a field trip that will be remembered for years! There are **NO** guarantees on this one, but we are going to put ourselves in a good spot and hope that we'll get lucky. Photographers needed to document our hoped-for find!!!! There is lots of pawpaw in the vicinity too, so Zebra Swallowtail should be found as well.

We will also look for Baltimore Checkerspot in the only location currently known in Hamilton County. Other areas **may** be visited if there is time. Trip will be cancelled if it is raining.

Sunblock and hat are suggested. Footwear: Comfortable sneakers or hiking boots. No sandals, flip-flops or **crocs** please! (See croc story, pg. 2)

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 towards Dayton. You'll go 2-3 miles. Kangaroo Express is on the right side of the road just before the 2nd traffic light you'll see after you cross the lake. (It sells BP gas and is the only modern convenience store in Bakewell. If you go through this light and get to the school zone signs, you've gone too far!

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

Butterfly Field Trip Discovers Crocs in the Mudhole!

I was off work and tax day seemed a good time to hold a Thursday morning butterfly field trip to the Moccasin Bend area. The sun was supposed to shine and we were optimistic it would warm up.

Butterfly activity was kind of slow, but one very pleasant surprise was a Monarch that sailed over our heads, the first of the spring reported in Tennessee! After all we've read about the terrible winter the Monarchs experienced in the Mexican mountains, it was good to see one heading north.

We surveyed the Blue Blazes Trail area. This road was still relatively shaded, so no Falcate Orangetips were up yet. We did spot several first-of-year Pearl Crescents and Eastern Tailed Blues.

A walk along Moccasin Bend Road supplied a few more butterflies, including our first Falcate Orangetip and a Mourning Cloak which flitted about and then posed for us nearby on the ground.

We decided not to walk back on the road, but to take the grassy, recently mown area between the woods and a very small stream. I commented that I *hoped* we'd be able to get across that small ditch at the other end without any trouble. We found a few anglewings that refused to sit still for an identification before reaching the water crossing. It LOOKED like you could easily step over to the other side. Trouble was, there was mud involved - on both sides. Soft, sticky, gooey mud.

This is where it happened, the "Croc Incident". A certain participant had heeded my warning not to wear sandals, but had instead chosen to slip on some crocs (comfortable plastic footwear that goes on like bedroom slippers) for the field trip. She made it to the other side, then sank up over her ankles. One foot came out of the mud with a loud slurp, but her croc remained at the bottom of the hole. Next step was a repeat of the last one. Now both crocs were buried in the mud. The now croc-less butterfly watcher crawled to safety, muddy, but finally on dry ground. Yours truly, being the last to cross, bravely reached into the muck above my wrist (I should have taken my watch off first!), and finally succeeded in pulling the reluctant crocs, oozing soft mud, back into the sunlight. Vaughn's water bottle helped rinse off some of the mud.

New rule: No sandals *or* crocs on field trips!

A Note from your President

How would you feel if you received your monthly issue of the Tennessee Valley NABA Chapter newsletter and read the front page headline **MONTHLY NABA MEETINGS CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF INTEREST?** If you don't care, read no further.

Only three people showed up for our March meeting. I was very happy to see the three ladies who were there! I presented my program on butterfly farming in Costa Rica, hopefully they learned a few things about that industry and we had a good time visiting.

Our plant swap at the April meeting was better attended. A couple of Master Gardeners who heard about it from Lisa Lemza attended. I think we had six chapter members there, including one that drove up from Valley Head, Alabama. We all went home with new plants or seeds, got rid of some "extras" and had a fun time.

Low attendance presents a problem. It is difficult to justify having someone come in and present a program if only 3-4 people are going to show up. This is especially true if they must drive 2-3 hours. It sure would be nice to have a few more bodies present.

Our Tennessee Valley NABA chapter is a "bonus" for folks that join the North American Butterfly Association. If you live within a certain zip code area and join the national organization, you automatically become a member of our chapter. Others from outside that zip area have opted to join our chapter as well. NABA and I appreciate your support.

As a member of this chapter you've received information about monthly meetings, butterfly field trips, local butterfly counts, other environmental events and what I feel is currently the best monthly butterfly newsletter in Tennessee. If this club goes away due to lack of interest, I hope you'll continue to support NABA and receive their excellent publications. Maybe this would be enough for you. I realize people are busy and there are many other things going on in our lives. I realize some members live far away and can't make the drive.

At a recent Wednesday evening bible study at my church, our pastor challenged us with this question. "What kind of church would this be if every member had *your* level of commitment?" He was encouraging us to look at what we as individuals contribute to the church as a whole. It was a question that required some serious thought. I had to honestly acknowledge that I probably should do even more.

I'm now going to ask you a similar question. What kind of NABA chapter is this going to be if every member has your level of commitment? Always remember, the people make the club. Think about it. I welcome your feedback.

Bill Haley
President, Tennessee Valley NABA

April Butterfly Sightings:

April 2: David Spicer spent some time on Starr Mountain in McMinn County. He only saw 7 butterflies all day, but two were Henry's Elfins (see photo below), 4 were azures and one was an unidentified sulphur.



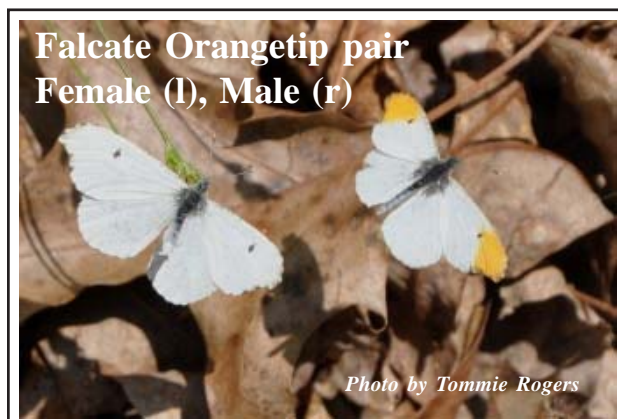
April 10: David Spicer saw a Pipevine Swallowtail at Baylor School, a first of the year (FOY) sighting in Hamilton County.

April 12: Steve McGaffin took an interesting photo of a mated pair of sulphurs. What makes it noteworthy is that it is a Clouded Sulphur and an Orange Sulphur, two "cousins" that are known to frequently interbreed. This photo was taken in Knox County.



April 13: Bill Haley spotted a butterfly sitting on the sidewalk very near the Veteran's Bridge on his walk to work around 7:30am. It was a male Great Purple Hairstreak! He succeeded in getting it to climb onto a finger and then transferred it to vegetation alongside the sidewalk to keep it from being stepped on.

April 18: While we usually keep butterfly sightings relatively local, I very important discovery was made by Jean Obrist in Cocke County, TN. She discovered a colony of Olympia Marbles, a butterfly usually found much farther north. According to folks who have visited the area to see these butterflies, the plant variety there is amazing and supports a lot of butterflies and birds. Other butterflies seen in the area include Harvester, West Virginia White, Falcate Orangetip and Henry's Elfin. (See photos below.)



April 15: The field trip to the Blue Blazes area, and a couple of other spots on Moccasin Bend produced the following butterfly list, with several first-of-year species for Hamilton County:

- Tiger Swallowtail
- Pipevine Swallowtail (FOY)
- Falcate Orange-tip
- Sleepy Orange (FOY)
- Orange Sulphur
- Monarch (FOY)
- Pearl Crescent (FOY)
- Spring Azure
- Eastern Tailed Blue (FOY)
- American Snout
- Question Mark
- Eastern Comma
- Mourning Cloak
- Juvenal's Duskywing
- Silver-spotted Skipper (FOY)



Photo by David Spicer

New Tennessee Valley NABA Website!

<http://naba.org/chapters/nabatv/>

Dave Spicer asks if you have a photo gallery you would like others to see, to please send him the URL for it and he will add it to the Photos page.

We still need lots of help writing about places to go to see butterflies. Several have been put on the Places to Go page as an attempt to get this started. Please send Dave a write-up about places you know about. His e-mail address is: dspicer@chattanooga.net.

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April 21: Jeff Basham reported, "About 50 Cobweb Skippers in one location (in Polk County) and a few others seen here and there at other sites. The variety of color and markings is amazing. The one below is likely a female due to the overall chocolate brown coloration. The males tend to be much more amber colored and have the white cobwebby connecting lines that probably got them their name. The subspecies we have here in Tennessee appears to be *Hesperia metea intermedia*."



Cobweb Skipper
Hesperia metea intermedia

Photo by Jeff Basham

Jeff continues, "I don't know if this holds true for other observers in our state, but I have only seen the Cobweb nectaring on purple blooms. (Much like their cousins, the Leonard's). Their favorite seems to be birdfoot violet, but sometimes on purple phacelia, as seen below, and a few others."

Jeff also took a wonderful photo of a Zebra Swallowtail in the Cherokee National Forest.



Cobweb Skipper, male
 dorsal view

Photo by Jeff Basham



Zebra Swallowtail

Photo by Jeff Basham

April 23: J.N. Howard reported a FOY Giant Swallowtail, Sleepy Duskywing and Lace-winged Roadside Skipper from his place in Fiery Gizzard Cove in Marion County.

April 23: Jeff Basham found Golden-banded Skippers, Appalachian Tiger Swallowtails, Northern Cloudywing, and Zabulon Skippers in Polk County. (See photos on next page).

Golden-banded Skipper

Autochton cellus



April 25: It seems Jeff Basham has had plenty of time to explore for butterflies this spring. His reports keep coming in with more great finds. He writes, "It rained all day last Saturday, but on Sunday we had a few hours to sally forth into Polk County. We were able to find 40 species." Noteworthy species found were: American Copper, Great Purple Hairstreak, Juniper Hairstreak, Eastern Pine Elfin, Monarch, Hoary Edge, Horace's Duskywing, Mottled Duskywing, Sachems and Dusted Skippers.

American Copper



Appalachian Tiger Swallowtail

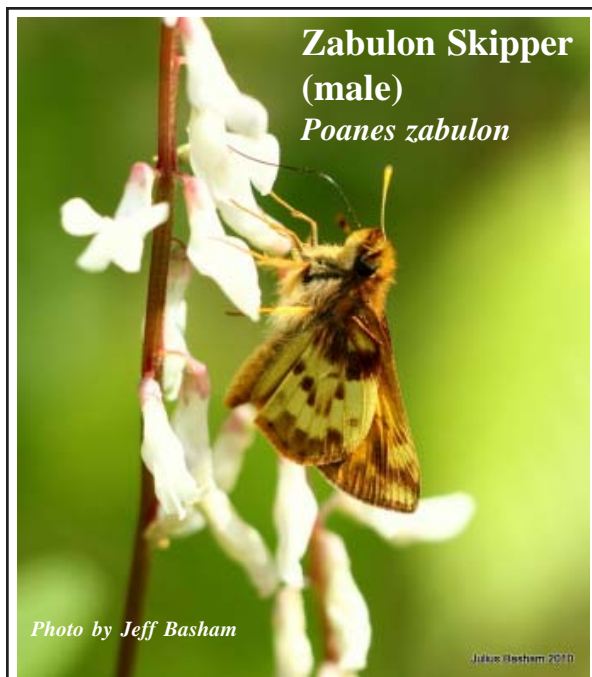


Eastern Pine Elfin



Zabulon Skipper (male)

Poanes zabulon



Juniper Hairstreak



BUTTERFLY FORAY PLANNED IN SOUTH-CENTRAL TENNESSEE JUNE 18-20

HELP REQUESTED FOR A NABA BUTTERFLY COUNT DURING THIS FORAY!

During one of the three days of the butterfly foray planned in counties in south-central Tennessee June 18-20, I hope to conduct a NABA-style butterfly count. To accomplish this task, I will lead one field party during the count, but I need at least two more competent butterflyers to lead two more field parties on the day of the count, probably Saturday, June 19.

If you would be willing to spend at least six hours on June 19 (or on a different date, either June 18 or June 20, if we're weathered out on the 19th), please reply about your commitment to this project.

Steve Stedman
Cookeville, Putnam Co.

Steve's e-mail address is: Sstedman@tntech.edu

AREA BUTTERFLY COUNTS SCHEDULED, 2010

Below are the NABA butterfly counts compiled by Bill Haley. If you compile other area counts, please let him know (wgh@tnaqua.org) so he can list them.

Sat., June 12: Tennessee River Gorge, TN

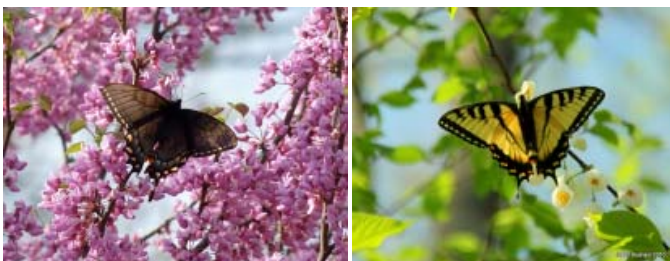
Sat., June 26; Soddy-Daisy, TN

Sat., July 10: Lookout Mountain, GA

Sat., July 17: Catoosa-Whitfield Co., GA

Sat., July 31: Stevenson, AL

Sat., Sept. 4: Tennessee River Gorge, TN (seasonal fall count)



Tiger Swallowtail, photos by: Mike O'Brien (l) and Jeff Basham (r)

Tennessee Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies) List-Serve Announced:

I'd like to announce a new list-serve dedicated to Tennessee Odonata. The address is tn-dragonflies@freelists.org. It's a place to share sightings of, and discussions about, our dragonflies and damselflies. The interest in this insect group seems to be growing, and many of you out looking at birds and butterflies get distressed by a fascination by the "dragons and damsels" and want to learn more. Several folks have expressed interest in such a dedicated list, so I invite you to join. Beginners are most welcome, and would probably benefit most from this group. There is already a region-wide list called SE-Odonata that I would encourage members to join also.

TN-dragonflies has just gotten off the ground and some details are yet to be worked out, but it will operate like other lists you are familiar with, so hop in if interested.

You can subscribe by sending an e-mail to: tn-dragonflies-request@freelist.org with "subscribe" in the Subject field, or by visiting <http://www.freelists.org/list/tn-dragonflies>, or I can place you on the mailing list if you'll let me know.

As with other lists, photos can be attached and shared with members. Most photos should be less than 1mb, re-sized so they are not too small, not too large, approx. 700 X 500 pixels.

Other resources - books, websites, etc. can be suggested as we go along.

Richard Connors
Nashville



Photo by Susan Schott