



Photo by  
Tommie Rogers

# On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

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**February Meeting  
Tuesday, Feb. 22  
7:00pm**

**Tropical Cove and  
Butterfly Garden exhibits  
Ocean Journey building  
Tennessee Aquarium**

You can expect a good number of butterfly species and some great photo opportunities at our first NABA meeting of 2011. While February will be a bit early in the season to seek out native butterflies, prospects look good for some wonderful butterfly sightings. Our meeting will take place in the tropics...the Tennessee Aquarium's Tropical Cove and Butterfly Garden exhibits.

If you have a camera, be sure to bring it along. We'll start our adventure in the Tropical Cove, which features many beautiful orchid species and other interesting tropical plants. (At that time of the evening, no stingray touching will be permitted.) From there we'll explore the Butterfly Garden exhibit. We will plan to release a few butterflies that evening for some real up-close and personal viewing.

**WHERE DO WE MEET?** We will meet at the main entrance to the **Ocean Journey building, the newer building near Market Street**. Someone will be waiting near the door to let you in. After we've gathered everyone up, we'll proceed to the two exhibits on the 4th floor. Try to be on time at 7:00, as the building will be closed to the public. If you show up late, there may not be anyone there to give you access to the building. Training for new volunteer Aquarium docents at the Stingray Bay touch tank will take place that same evening, so we'll need to be careful not to disrupt that training.

You can park for free at a parking meter, or pay to park in a nearby parking lot or garage.

## First Butterfly Sighting of 2011!



Photo by  
Jeff Basham

Julius Basham 2011

The last weekend in January provided our area with a much-needed respite from frigid winter temperatures and snow. Sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-60's gave someone a chance to find at least one butterfly flitting about in the winter woods.

Jeff Basham reported not one, but two, Question Marks found during a hike in Polk County on Saturday, January 29. Jeff commented: "A basically orange hindwing indicates that this is a winter form individual. It was missing a chunk of its right forewing, but still looking pretty fresh, after just enduring 15 inches of snow.

Celeste Byles held back the dogs, Smith and Wesson, while I snapped some photos of the butterflies. Taking dogs for a hike and photographing butterflies are usually mutually exclusive activities, unless someone is there to manage the pups.

It occurred to me that all the anglewings that I have ever seen in January have turned out to be Question Marks. The only other species that I have encountered in the first month have been Mourning Cloaks and Painted Ladys. I would be interested to know what other species have been recorded in our state in this, the coldest of months. It is always a great boost to the spirit to see a real, live butterfly, briskly winging about this time of the year."

## Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

### On Your Mark, Get Set....

February's here. We've made it through December and January. This winter, at times, has been both beautiful and a pain in the you-know-what. One thing it hasn't been is warm enough to produce any cold-season butterfly sightings.

At least there weren't any butterflies seen before Saturday, January 29, when temperatures reached the mid-60's and the sun shone brightly. Jeff Basham broke the ice with his sighting of two Question Marks in Polk County. Way to go Jeff! The first butterflies of the year 2011.

I hoped to get out on a weekend butterfly excursion myself, but a basket workshop on Saturday afternoon kept me indoors until 5:00.

Sunday I decided to do a bit of yard work after church. It was time to rake the leaves off my early spring flower beds if I expect the bloodroot to show itself by the end of February. I didn't spot a single butterfly. However, as I raked, I was pleasantly surprised when a leaf-green katydid with a wingspan of over 3 inches flew from a pile of leaves. Even though it wasn't a butterfly it was an unexpected summertime insect in January. I was so excited when it landed on a nearby window screen I decided to put the leaves on hold for a few minutes to admire this brave and beautiful wintertime survivor.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I hope we have a cold winter so it'll kill all the bugs!"? Somehow we always seem to have plenty of bugs the next summer, no matter what the preceding winter was like. I'm always a bit amused when someone talks about insects being very fragile. Question Marks and katydids in January would beg to differ with that opinion! The truth of the matter is - *insects are survivors*.

I have spent some time these last couple of months studying different butterfly overwintering strategies. It is difficult to believe that tiny caterpillars have wiled away these cold winter months in diapause, snuggled in the leaf litter, waiting for the first green shoots of spring. As the days grow longer and it warms up, they'll pick up there life cycle where it was interrupted by Old Man Winter. My guess is that we'll see butterflies this spring, no matter how tough the rest of the winter. Ready, get set....

## Take Off!



Photo by  
Mike O'Brien

**Things to Come:** You can't go wrong with a Common Buckeye and beautiful Zinnias! I have often thought that the Common Buckeye is one of our most strikingly-marked butterflies and zinnias are a favorite butterfly nectar plant. Mike O'Brien, of Valley Head, Alabama just e-mailed me this great shot of a Common Buckeye, in mid-flap, launching itself from a zinnia bloom. He explained that he was going through all his photo files, cleaning them up a bit and happened to run across this shot, which he named Take Off. He thought I might enjoy seeing it, and I thought all you NABA members might enjoy it. (No.....his photo wasn't taken in January 2011!)



Joining online is easy. Go to the NABA 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.

Anyone who joins NABA 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 Tennessee Valley chapter.

It is also possible for persons living outside this zip code area to become members 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.