



Photo by Mike O'Brien

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

March 2011

Volume 4, Number 11

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

March Meeting

Tuesday, March 22 - 7:00pm

Outdoor Chattanooga

Handbook for Butterfly Watchers

Bill Haley will present a program featuring excerpts from the excellent book, Handbook for Butterfly Watchers, by Robert Michael Pyle. Bill will include many butterfly and flower images to go along with the narration of quotes from the book. Be sure to come out and learn more about this book and the study of butterflies. Please bring a friend! Everyone is invited!

Robert Michael Pyle is the founder of the Xerces Society, which is devoted to the study of invertebrates. Handbook for Butterfly Watchers was originally published in 1984. In addition, he has also authored Watching Washington Butterflies, and The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies. If you have not read this book, it is highly recommended for anyone who has an interest in butterflies, and is still relevant for butterfly lovers today. It covers a wide range of topics related to the study of these beautiful flying jewels. It would be a good addition to your butterfly library. Not wishing to leave out their night-flying cousins, Mr. Pyle even added a chapter near the end of the book titled "Moths: Learning to Love Them."

WHERE DO WE MEET? We will meet at Outdoor Chattanooga, near Coolidge Park on River Street. This is on the north side of the Tennessee River. Turn off Frazier Avenue towards the Chattanooga Theatre Center, then turn right on River Street. Outdoor Chattanooga is on the left just before you go under the Walnut Street Bridge.

You can park for free on the street, or park in one of the pay lots. Please be sure to pay, (only \$1-2), or you run the risk of getting a parking ticket!

Photo above: What is it? Do you see the butterfly?

Mark Your April Calendar!
First Butterfly Count of 2011

Saturday, April 16

Tennessee River Gorge

Spring Seasonal Butterfly Count

Plan to come out and help with the first scheduled NABA count of 2011. We'll explore the Tennessee River Gorge count circle, seeking whatever early spring butterflies are to be found. Mark your calendar now for a nice spring day in the field with butterflies and wildflowers on Saturday, April 16, 2011. More information to come in next month's newsletter.

Early Season Butterfly Sightings

Feb. 15: Lisa Lemza spotted a **Mourning Cloak** on the Heiss Mountain Trailhead of the Cumberland Trail.

Feb. 17: Mike O'Brien's wife found a **Mourning Cloak** on their property in Valley Head, Alabama.

Feb. 17: Jeff Basham had a wonderful butterfly day in Polk County, counting **31 Mourning Cloaks!** He commented they were out in force that sunny, warm day and patrolling territories. Also seen was a **Question Mark**.

Feb. 19: David Spicer explored Enterprise South Nature Park, near the new VW plant. He found a **Question Mark**, **Mourning Cloak** and a possible **American Snout**. Seeing something large flying his way, he was surprised that it turned out to be a bat!

Feb. 24: Jeff Basham spotted an **American Snout** at Parkridge Hospital in Chattanooga.

Feb. 25: Tommie Rogers reported several **Orange Sulphurs** seen in Marion County.

Feb. 26: Bill Haley saw his first butterfly of the year, an **American Snout**, at the Wolftever Creek greenway.

Feb. 27: While on a walk to explore Civil War cannon emplacements on Moccasin Bend, Bill Haley saw an **American Snout** and a **Mourning Cloak**. Earlier that morning, he saw an **Orange Sulphur** in Soddy-Daisy.

(cont. on pg. 3, *Sightings*)

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

March: In Like a Lion....

There is an old saying about March weather. "In like a lion, out like a lamb." While I generally consider it to be springtime once March arrives, there is some truth that March can start off with terrible winter weather, and (only sometimes) ends up mild. It is safe to say that March is a month of weather extremes.

Someone brought an interesting calendar to our office. On each date significant historic weather events in Tennessee are listed. I checked out March. Following are some interesting facts about weather in March.

March 1: In 1980, 2 day snow storm dumped 3-6" of snow across area, Knoxville had 4".

March 2: Devastating ice storm hit area in 1960. \$5 million in damage, mountains hardest hit. (I can still remember the great ice storm of 1960!)

March 3: In 1999, snowstorm hit the area. 4-14" of snow fell above 2000 feet.

March 6: In 2004, storm caused flooding in Rhea County, a bridge washed out, \$100,000 in damage.

March 8: Snowstorm hit area in 1995.

March 9: In 1960, snowstorm hit the area. 13" of snow at Tri-Cities, 8.7" at Knoxville.

March 13: Heavy snow hit 1993. Knoxville and Tri-Cities had 14" in 2 days while 20" fell at Chattanooga. (Blizzard of '93!)

March 15: In 1973, 4-10" of rain fell in a 2-day period causing extensive flooding over the area. 4 died.

March 17: 5-8" of rain flooded east TN and southwest VA on the 17th-18th of 2002. One died, \$6 million damage.

March 19: In 2008, squall line hit the area with extensive wind damage, golfball-sized hail.

March 26: Late season snowstorm hit area in 1999. Up to 6" in the valley, 8-12" in mountains.

March 29: Tornado hit Hamilton and Bradley Co. in 1997. \$48 million damage, 94 hurt.

March 30: Storms hit the valley in 1977. Gusts to 70 mph caused over \$100,000 wind damage.

March 31: Thunderstorms hit area in 1993. Several golfball-sized hail events reported.

Whatever the weather in March 2011, I'm hoping for mild weather, (at least part of the month), and plenty of early spring butterflies.

Field Trip Leaders and Program Presenters Needed

The NABA Tennessee Valley chapter has begun a new year of meetings and activities. We are looking for some programming ideas throughout the year. If you have thoughts or suggestions, please contact Bill Haley at wgh@tnaqua.org or (423) 326-9248 (cell), (423) 785-4056 (W) or (423) 756-4106 (H).

Last year we experimented with meeting at several member's homes, especially during the summer. This proved to be quite popular. Let Bill know if you'd consider hosting a monthly meeting at your place in 2011.

Any field trip leaders out there? Our members enjoy seeing butterflies "in the wild". If you have a favorite butterfly area, perhaps you could lead a trip. Please let Bill know. Step up and share your special spots!

BIOBLITZ 2011: HELP NEEDED!

The BioBlitz at Reflection Riding will be held May 20-21, 2011. Someone is needed to survey butterflies both days and help with blacklighting Friday night. A butterfly walk leader on Saturday is needed also. Bill Haley, who usually does this, cannot help that weekend. Contact Julia Gregory, jmg@tnaqua.org, or Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org.



Photo by Jeff Basham

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.

Juvenal's Duskywing

If you see a very early spring duskywing, think Juvenal's!

You are searching for butterflies along a county road in early spring. Butterflies are still somewhat scarce. You've spotted your first two Falcate Orangetips of the year. No problem identifying them!

An azure is puddling in a pull-off. Darn those "split-ters". Now they tell us that you can't be certain what exact species of azure it is. Things are getting complicated for a poor butterfly watcher in the field.

Suddenly a dark small-to-medium sized butterfly zooms past! It flies rapidly, about a foot above the ground patrolling a certain area back and forth. It never seems to get tired. Finally it lands and you get a hurried 3 second view of the upperside. OK, what did you learn? Wings were held flat, way too small for a swallowtail - must be a spread-winged skipper. You reason it is probably a duskywing of some sort. As it flies off, you turn to your trusty field guide and look for duskywing photos, trying to remember the cryptic dark and light patches on the wings.

Oh, no! Talk about difficult! You are reminded that duskywings look very much alike, true "sparrows of the butterfly world". To make matters worse, you note that several can be found here. Is it a Juvenal's or a Horace's, the two largest? Reading the descriptions you see that a conclusive field mark for Juvenal's is two tiny tan spots...on the underside of the hind wing. The underside? How in the world do you EVER get a look at the underside???

Juvenal's Duskywing enters diapause each winter as final-stage caterpillars, but they are the earliest emerging of all northern skippers. They usually beat the very similar appearing Horace's by at least 3-4 weeks. So if you are butterfly flying in very early spring, you can begin the season by playing the odds. If it is a duskywing, it is probably a Juvenal's. Later on the smaller Sleepy, Dreamy and Wild Indigo Duskywings and the cloudywings muddy the picture a bit. By the time the similar-sized Horace's Duskywing become predominant, the single-brooded Juvenal's is about done for the year.

Juvenal's Duskywing, female (dorsal view)



Photo by
Jeff Basham
April-Basham 2010

Juvenal's Duskywing females have a more prominent pattern than the darker colored males.

Juvenal's
Duskywing
Erynnis juvenalis
(ventral)



Photo by
Mike O'Brien

Look closely at the hindwing. You can see the two distinctive tan spots that cinch the Juvenal's identification.

Sightings, (cont. from pg. 1):

March 4: Susan Schott reported a **Mourning Cloak** on Raccoon Mountain in Marion County.

March 4: Jeff Basham and Stephen Johnson spent some time in Polk County and found several butterflies. Among their finds were **2 Checkered Whites**, **2 Spring Azures** and several **Clouded Sulphurs**.

See page 4 for some early spring photos.



Mourning Cloak, *Nymphalis antiopa*. Found on Feb. 17, 2011 in Polk County.



Question Mark, *Polygonia interrogationis*. Polk County, Feb. 17, 2011.



Checkered White, *Pontia protodice*. Polk County March 4, 2011.



Clouded Sulphur, *Colias philodice*. Polk County, March 4, 2011.



All photos on this page by Jeff Basham.