



Photo by Tanya Jordan

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

July 2011

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Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

Mid-Summer Break No July Meeting

Due to several of our members being out of town on vacation on our regularly scheduled meeting date, there will be no Tennessee Valley NABA meeting in July. To enjoy great NABA fellowship, plan to join us for one of the butterfly counts listed on this page.

Our next scheduled Tennessee Valley NABA meeting will be **Tuesday, August 23.**

TENNESSEE RIVER GORGE COUNT TOTALS SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2011

Bill Haley and Susan Schott made up one counting party, with David Spicer and Scott Spicer making up a second party. Temperatures ranged from 85-96 degrees on count day. Both teams faced some weather challenges. For 2-3 weeks prior to the count it was extremely dry so many nectar sources had bloomed after our abundant early spring rains and were already dried up. Mimosas were in full bloom and were popular with some species. A mid-day thunderstorm moved into the area and counting was suspended between 2:30 and 4:00. Clouds remained for awhile after the rains and butterfly activity continued slow in the late afternoon.

Species and Numbers: Pipevine Swallowtail 39, Zebra Sw. 1, Spicebush Sw. 18, E. Tiger Sw. 28, Orange Sulphur 16, Sleepy Orange 2, Coral Hairstreak 13, Banded Ha. 29, Striped Ha. 2, E. Tailed Blue 44, Summer Azure 6, Am. Snout 2, Variegated Fritillary 19, Diana Fr. 7 (1 female), Great Spangled Fr. 52, Pearl Crescent 15, Question Mark 3, E. Comma 1, Am. Lady 1, Comm. Buckeye 24, Red-sp. Purple 3, Hackberry Emperor 7, Tawny Emp. 3, N. Pearly-Eye 1, Creole Pearly-Eye 1, Gemmed Satyr 1, Little Wood Satyr 5, Monarch 1, Silver-sp. Skipper 21, Hoary Edge 6, S. Cloudywing 1, N. Cloudywing 8, Horace's Duskywing 3, Wild Indigo Du. 1, Least Sk. 2, Fiery Sk. 1, Crossline Sk. 5, Little Glassywing 1, Dun Sk. 2.

Total: 39 species, 386 individuals.

Saturday, July 9

8th Annual Catoosa-Whitfield County, Georgia Count

Meet: 9:30 at convenience store at intersection of East Brainerd Rd. and Ooltewah-Ringgold Road. For directions or info, call Bill Haley (423) 785-4056 (W), (423) 756-4106 (H), (423) 326-9248, cell, or e-mail WGH@tnaqua.org.

We will caravan to the start of the count circle from the convenience store. After all our late June rains, perhaps the nectar sources and butterfly populations will rebound. This can be a very productive and interesting count!

Saturday, July 16

9th Annual Stevenson, Alabama Count

MEET: 9:00AM at the Food Lion on Brown's Ferry Road. (1st exit off I-24W after Moccasin Bend - turn right off exit, store is on the left in 1/4 mile. We will caravan to Stevenson City Park from here. Be prompt, we won't wait long after 9:00 before heading towards Alabama! Or you can meet us in the first parking lot at 10:00AM Eastern at Stevenson City Park in Stevenson, Alabama. Compiler: Bill Haley, (see contact info above).

Join us and explore new territory! Late summer is usually the peak of butterfly abundance in this area. This is the last NABA 4th of July count that Bill Haley compiles in 2011. We may do one or two fall seasonal counts after August 1. See pg. 3 for tentative dates.

REMEMBER: All participants in NABA butterfly counts must pay a \$3 fee for each count they help with. The money goes to NABA to help offset NABA's cost to publish count summaries of all counts conducted this year. Contact Bill Haley if you wish to purchase this book. Cost is \$7 for NABA members.

Chapter Officers for 2011-2012

President: Bill Haley (wgh@tnaqua.org)

Vice-President: David Spicer

Secretary - Susan Schott

Treasurer - Jennifer Taylor

Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

The Weather Variable

Can you tell from one year to the next whether a species is declining or expanding by conducting annual butterfly counts? The answer to that question is a definite NO. Counts are better viewed as long-term data. I've been doing counts for seventeen years now and have discovered that numbers can swing dramatically from one year to the next.

Case in point: Several years ago I went out a couple of days prior to a count and Dianas were everywhere! We saw 4-5 trying to crowd onto one thistle bloom. It was amazing. I knew we had a good shot at the record that year and we got it. The Tennessee River Gorge count tallied the most Diana Fritillaries that had ever been documented on any butterfly count in North America. The previous high count was 84. We found 139. We still hold the continental record for this species.

The next year we conducted the same count, almost to the day, in the same areas. How many Dianas were found? Zero.

Did that signal a population crash for this species? No. A week after the River Gorge count we found Dianas in normal numbers on the Soddy-Daisy count. The weather followed different patterns in those two years. The winter or early spring was possibly a bit colder or more rainy and the Dianas emerged later the second year.

Some butterfly species have only one period each year when the adults fly. Others may have several different broods. Often you'll have a gap between broods of a certain species. Weather - hot, cold, wet, dry, can have a huge impact on when butterfly broods emerge.

The sometimes very abundant Carolina Satyr is normally our most common satyr. We've completed two counts in 2011 as I write this article. We have yet to count a single Carolina Satyr. I can only conclude that we have been between broods those first two weeks. The same can be said of some of our normally most abundant skipper species.

Weather keeps things interesting....and unpredictable. Weather controls the natural world and gives us all something to talk about.

**SODDY-DAISY, TN COUNT TOTALS
SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2011**

Participants included Nancy Williams, Susan Schott, David Spicer, Scott Spicer and Bill Haley. Conditions for finding butterflies were tough. It was a windy day that was overcast all morning and most of the afternoon. We enjoyed some sunshine for a little over an hour in the afternoon and then a thunderstorm struck at 3:30, ending the day's count. Despite these factors, we were able to locate 31 species. David and Scott Spicer had the best finds of the day, a Southern Dogface and a Juniper Hairstreak.

Species and Numbers: Pipevine Swallowtail 2, E. Tiger Sw. 5, Spicebush Sw. 3, Clouded Sulphur 1, Orange Su. 13, Southern Dogface 1, Sleepy Orange 1, Coral Hairstreak 2, Banded Ha. 6, Striped Ha. 1, Juniper Ha. 1, Gray Ha. 2, E. Tailed-Blue 33, Summer Azure 4, Variegated Fritillary 1, Diana Fr. 6 (1 female), Gr. Spangled Fr. 41, Pearl Crescent 19, Question Mark 1, American Lady 2, Common Buckeye 13, Red-sp. Purple 1, Little Wood Satyr 1, Common Wood Nymph 2, Monarch 1, Wild Indigo Duskywing 5, Clouded Skipper 3, Fiery Sk. 1, Sachem 2, Delaware Sk. 1.

Total: 31 species, 176 individuals.



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.

Tentative dates - seasonal counts:

Fri., Aug. 5: Soddy-Daisy, TN
Fri., Aug. 19: Tennessee River Gorge

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, GA COUNT TOTALS
SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2011

Bill Haley, Susan Schott and Nancy Williams enjoyed a beautiful sunny day, thankfully without the recent afternoon thunderstorms thrown in. They counted from 10:00 to 5:30 and found 34 species. Sunshine was 95% all day long and temperatures ranged from 81-93 F. Winds were light to non-existent. Due to recent rains, more nectar sources were available, although one field that usually has abundant orange butterfly weed and two large fields usually full of blooming pink clover had been recently cut. These usually very productive areas, especially for skippers, had to be skipped on count day. A lack of skipper diversity affected our final total, but Sachems finally showed up in good numbers. A Eufala Skipper, our find of the day, is new to the count and very uncommon in the area. Despite quite a bit of blooming orange butterfly weed on Lookout Mountain, we weren't able to find a single Diana or Great Spangled Fritillary. Swallowtail numbers were noticeably low also, and we completely missed Pipevine and Spicebush - usually our two most numerous swallowtail species.

Species and Numbers: Black Swallowtail 1, Giant Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 1, Cabbage White 2, Clouded Sulphur 2, Orange Sulphur 16, Cloudless Su. 1, Sleepy Orange 1, Banded Hairstreak 2, Striped Ha. 2, Juniper Ha. 1, E. Tailed-Blue 51, Summer Azure 3, Am. Snout 5, Gulf Fritillary 1, Variegated Fr. 26, Pearl Crescent 31, Am. Lady 3, Common Buckeye 34, Red-sp. Purple 3, Viceroy 1, Southern Pearly-Eye 1, Appalachian Brown 1, Carolina Satyr 4, Little Wood Satyr 1, Common Wood Nymph 5, Silver-sp. Skipper 3, S. Cloudywing 1, N. Cloudywing 1, Least Sk. 5, Tawny-edged Sk. 1, Sachem 72, Dun Sk. 2, Eufala Sk. 1. **Immatures:** Variegated Fritillary 1 caterpillar. **Total: 34 species, 286 individuals.**



Coral Hairstreak
Satyrium titus

Photo by
 Nancy
 Williams

Coral Hairstreaks love to nectar on the blooms of orange butterfly weed. Their row of spots along the edge of the hindwing is exactly the same color as the flowers. This one was spotted by Bill Haley at the edge of the road atop Bakewell Mountain on the Soddy-Daisy count on Sat., June 18.



Southern Dogface
Colias cesonia

Photo by
 David Spicer

Best find on the Soddy-Daisy count was a **Southern Dogface** discovered by David and Scott Spicer. It is quite uncommon in this area. It was found in the same spot as one on last year's count!



Eufala Skipper

Photo by
 Nancy
 Williams

Eufala Skipper, *Lerodea eufala*, is a bit north of its range in our area, but one was found on the Lookout Mountain, GA count June 25.

The **Eufala Skipper** is the northernmost representative of a fairly large tropical genus of grass skippers. It is described as being small and inconspicuous and widespread but uncommon. Base color is a very light brown, variably covered by even gray overscaling, causing this tiny skipper to look much more gray than most other skippers.

Correction to Minutes of May 24, 2011 Meeting, Tennessee Valley NABA

Susan Schott, Secretary, was inadvertently left out of the listing of Tennessee Valley NABA officers for the upcoming year. This was my fault entirely. My humble apologies to Susan!
- your Editor

Our officers for 2011-2012 are:

- Bill Haley, President
- David Spicer, Vice-President
- Susan Schott, Secretary
- Jennifer Taylor, Treasurer



American Lady on Purple Coneflower



Photo by Mike O'Brien

Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*, is a 2-4 foot tall wildflower that does well in almost any well-drained soil and full sun. Not only are the blooms beautiful, their nectar can be very attractive to many butterfly species. They are perennials and mature clumps can be divided to provide new plants to spread around the garden. In my flower garden I always let them go to seed to provide food for the birds, and the American Goldfinch loves to dine on my coneflowers.

If you grow Tennessee Coneflower, an endangered species found on cedar glades in Middle Tennessee, be aware that you should not plant them in a garden containing the other form of Purple Coneflower, as they will cross-pollinate and any plants coming from seed will not be pure Tennessee Coneflower anymore.

Male Diana on Purple Coneflower



Photo by Tommie Rogers

"The wildflower gardener faces an almost certain destiny: Whether or not he starts out as a conservationist, he is going to finish as one. As the search continues for specimens increasingly hard to find, it will be realized how much beauty has already been destroyed by the waves of cement spreading outward from the cities-and how much more may disappear forever if not preserved in gardens.

In the publication *The Early American Soil Conservationist*, the United States Department of Agriculture says: 'The felling of the first tree by colonists in the New World, though never mentioned by historians, was an act of great significance. It marked the beginning of an era of the most rapid rate of wasteful land use in the history of the world.'

Even if wildflower gardening were not a beguiling hobby, it would be worth undertaking for a more important reason - to do whatever one could to help keep the threatened wildflowers alive."

Above, excerpts from "The History, the Beauty, the Riches of the Gardener's World", by Josephine Von Miklos and Evelyn Fiore. Random House, NY.

Butterfly / Dragonfly Garden "Unveiling" at E. G. Fisher Library in Athens, TN, Friday, July 8, 5:00-9:00pm

Bill Haley has been invited to set up an informational table about our Tennessee Valley NABA chapter and lead a walk through a brand new butterfly/dragonfly garden and constructed wetland at the E. G. Fisher Library in Athens, Tennessee on Friday evening, July 8. The event starts with a small reception and ribbon cutting. Bill's walk will probably take place around 8:00pm.

Several months ago Bill was contacted by one of the planners of this garden, asking for his input about host plants, a list of butterflies most common in our area, and comments about the planned garden. Their garden layout and plant selection were very well thought-out and impressive! Like all new gardens, they have had their challenges, not least of which is the hot, dry weather this summer. (Seems they have not gotten the regular rains we've enjoyed these past couple of weeks.) It will be very interesting to see what they've come up with and Bill is looking forward to attending.

Curious? All Tennessee Valley NABA members are invited to attend. If you'd like to ride up with Bill that evening, he'll have room and would welcome the company. This is a golden opportunity to highlight our Tennessee Valley NABA chapter and the beauty of Tennessee butterflies! Bill has done many Tennessee Aquarium programs at this beautiful library over the years.