



# On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

September 2011

Volume 5, Number 5

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

**September Meeting**  
**Tuesday, September 27**  
**7:00pm**  
**Tennessee River Gardens**  
on Highway 41

**Bring sandwiches or other finger foods, fruit, cookies, chips, dips or whatever you wish to share and we'll have a feast!**

Our last NABA meeting of 2011 will be at the Tennessee River Gardens, on Highway 41. Weather permitting, we'll take a walk around the gardens along the river to look at late-season flowers or butterflies and check out the new fern gardens that are being created with many, many different species of ferns. The weather this time of year is tricky. It could be 75 degrees or it could be 35 degrees. Come prepared and bring something good to snack on. If it is rainy or cold, we'll sit around the table and have some good food and fellowship.

## DIRECTIONS FROM CHATTANOOGA:

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

**Note:** The entrance to Tennessee River Gardens is NOT well-marked. If you reach the little white church on the right, you've gone too far. Turn around on Hwy. 41 and turn left at the first driveway.

Look for Migrating Monarchs in September!



The Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*, is one of the best-known insect migrants. They are on the move! The bottom photo of a tagged female Monarch was taken by Jeff Basham on Chilhowee Mountain in Sept. 2010.

## Around The Puddle

by Bill Haley

### Dog Day Fireworks

The male Monarch floated lazily about the front yard, flapping only as much as necessary. He didn't seem in any particular hurry as he surveyed the buffet I'd provided for thirsty travelers. The butterfly bush, which has made a very strong showing all summer, is still covered in magenta blooms. The multi-colored zinnia's around the mailbox, a bit sun-scalded and haggard-looking, now sprawl across the sidewalk, but are still a prime attraction for nectar-hungry butterflies. Orange cosmos adds to the floral fireworks display in my front yard.

Bur marigolds currently steal the show. I've watched and waited patiently all summer as several clumps grew to be 4-5 feet tall and just as wide. I knew the pay-off would come in the dog days of late summer with drifts of beautiful buttery-yellow blooms.

This spring when multitudes of bur marigolds began sprouting I realized I should take action. I pulled up several hundred young plants, keeping only the "best and strongest ones". It wasn't enough. They have completely taken over part of my garden, and have blocked the entrance to my sidewalk with help from an English garden aster. (I allowed it to encroach from the other side of the walk, because I thought the blue and yellow combo would be lovely.)

The garden aster is lagging behind, refusing to compete with a sea of yellow. It'll bloom when they are finished and it can have the stage all to itself. The dark purple New England asters directly behind the mound of bur marigolds is obviously in collusion with the garden aster, waiting it's turn too.

My yard swarms with eager pollinators of all descriptions. Skippers of several species constantly circle in a blizzard of frenetic activity, frequently stopping to enjoy the bounty of nectar. Swallowtails, Variegated and Gulf Fritillaries, Cloudless Sulphurs, Sleepy Oranges, Common Buckeyes, Pearl Crescents and other beautiful butterflies visit throughout the day.

They seem happy with my unkempt garden and my choice to let certain flowers run rampant. I'm happy with it as well.

## SODDY-DAISY, TN FALL SEASONAL COUNT TOTALS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 2011

Bill Haley conducted the fall seasonal count in the Soddy-Daisy circle on Friday, August 5. Since his Saturdays are all spoken for, the count day was switched to a Friday. Nobody else was available to count that day. The weather was exceptionally hot, with temperatures ranging between 85 and 98 degrees, with an afternoon heat index reported to be 108 F. Bill got in 6.5 hours between 10:00 and 4:30. Sun was 85% in the morning, 55% in the afternoon. Conditions, especially on the mountains, were extremely dry. Main nectar sources were pink clover and orange butterfly weed.

Bill concentrated on trying to find as many skipper species as he could early in the day, and had good success, identifying 17 species. A search in the North Chickamauga Creek gorge yielded 2 Golden-banded Skippers, the first time they've been found on a count. Unfortunately by the time he began searching for other butterflies in the afternoon, it had begun to cloud up and butterfly activity was way down. Because of this, big misses included Cabbage White, Clouded Sulphur, Little Yellow, Red-banded Hairstreak, American Snout, Diana Fritillary, Question Mark, Eastern Comma, Red Admiral, Hackberry Emperor, any of the Pearly-Eyes, Carolina Satyr, Common Wood Nymph, Horace's Duskywing and Common Checkered Skipper.

An approaching thunderstorm threatened at 4:30, so Bill finished the day with 36 species. This was far below the 53 species he found last year on the same count, when everything seemed to fall into place. Some years, like this one, it is tougher to find the diversity.

**Species and Numbers:** Pipevine Swallowtail 4, Black Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 7, Spicebush Sw. 36, Orange Su. 2, Cloudless Sulphur 5, Sleepy Orange 5, Gray Hairstreak 2, E. Tailed-Blue 87, Summer Azure 4, Gulf Fritillary 3, Variegated Fr. 2, Great Spangled Fr. 1, Pearl Crescent 3, American Lady 1, Common Buckeye 31, Red-sp. Purple 1, Tawny Emperor 1, Monarch 1, Silver-spotted Skipper 9, Golden-banded Sk. 2, Hoary Edge 9, Southern Cloudywing 2, N. Cloudywing 1, Wild Indigo Duskywing 5, Clouded Skipper 1, Least Sk. 3, Fiery Sk. 29, Tawny-edged Sk. 2, Crossline Sk. 1, Southern Broken-Dash 2, Northern Broken-Dash 1, Sachus 24, Delaware Sk. 1, Zabulon Sk. 3, Dun Sk. 13.

**Total: 36 species, 304 individuals.**



**TENNESSEE RIVER GORGE FALL SEASONAL  
COUNT TOTALS  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2011**

Bill Haley, Nancy Williams and Tommie Rogers conducted the Tennessee River Gorge fall seasonal count, held Friday, August 19. They counted in two parties from 8:00 to 1:30, finding 31 species. It was a sunny day with temperatures a bit cooler than some earlier 4th of July counts, ranging from 81-92 F. Winds were very light.

Bill would like to thank Nancy and Tommie for their efforts on this count.

**Species and Numbers:** Pipevine Swallowtail 7, Spicebush Sw. 3, E. Tiger Sw. 6, Checkered White 1, Cabbage White 1, Clouded Sulphur 3, Orange Sulphur 1, Cloudless Su. 25, Sleepy Orange 18, Gray Hairstreak 4, Red-banded Hairstreak 1, E. Tailed-Blue 33, Am. Snout 1, Gulf Fritillary 4, Variegated Fr. 1, Pearl Crescent 6, Common Buckeye 37, Red-sp. Purple 2, Tawny Emperor 2, Hackberry Emp. 5, Carolina Satyr 9, Silver-sp. Skipper 4, S. Cloudywing 1, Common Checkered Sk. 4, Clouded Sk. 3, Least Sk. 5, Fiery Sk. 6, N. Broken-dash 1, Sachem 61, Zabulon Sk. 1, Dun Sk. 2.

**Total: 31 species, 258 individuals.**

**Immatures:** Pipevine Swallowtail - 2 caterpillars on dutchman's pipe, Spicebush Swallowtail - 2 caterpillars on spicebush, Gulf Fritillary - 1 caterpillar on passionvine, Common Buckeye - 1 caterpillar on narrow-leaved plantain, Sleepy Orange - 2 eggs on sicklepod, Silvery Checkerspot - 4 caterpillars on coneflower.



**Red-banded  
Hairstreak**  
*Calycopis  
cecrops*

Photo by  
Mike O'Brien

It is always a pleasure to find a beautiful little Red-banded Hairstreak on a count. The second butterfly of the day on the Tennessee River Gorge fall count was this species, in Bill Haley's backyard. Although there is some uncertainty about their larval stage, it is thought the caterpillars prefer, moist, decaying sumac leaves as a larval food. Detritus-feeding makes them unique among our butterflies.

**Reakirt's  
Blue**  
*Hemiargus  
isola*



Photos by  
Bart Jones

Bart Jones recently discovered Reakirt's Blues in Shelby County, TN, a great new Tennessee record of a butterfly that normally occurs further west!



**Join  
NABA!**

Photo by  
Tanya Jordan

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.

"Glamor Shots" from Mike O'Brien's Yard



American Lady  
*Vanessa virginiensis*



Checkered White  
*Pontia protodice*



Clouded Sulphur  
*Colias philodice*



Sleepy Orange  
*Erema nicippe*

Sixteen Silvery Checkerspot Caterpillars found on Purple Coneflower in Tommie Rogers' Yard. Deer eat the coneflowers and almost all the caterpillars!

Tommie reports on Sept. 1: "This beautiful little butterfly emerged from the chrysalis only about a week after the chrysalis formed. I wasn't very scientific and failed to write down the date the chrysalis formed. I really regret most of all that I didn't take the sixteen caterpillars into captivity. I thought they would be better off outside. Deer came and ate most of the host plants along with the caterpillars. When I saw only one caterpillar remained, I bought more coneflowers and put the single caterpillar on those coneflowers inside my garage. The freshly-emerged Silvery Checkerspot flew vertical outside this morning and disappeared. The drought is so bad here that all plantings are dead except my potted lantana and blooming turtlehead. Deer don't seem to care for turtlehead. There is a large buck here every day with huge antlers, twelve points. He's handsome, but I could prefer to see butterflies, too."



Gulf Fritillary  
*Agraulis vanillae*

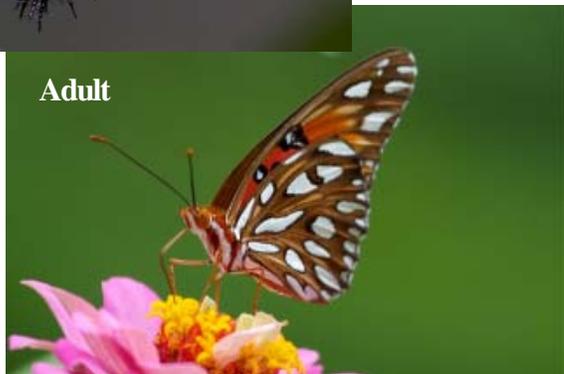


Eggs on passion-flower tendrils



Larva

All photos this page by Mike O'Brien



Adult