



On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

April 2012

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April Meeting

Tuesday, April 24, 2012
7:00pm
2nd annual Plant Swap
Outdoor Chattanooga
(on the North Shore)

Bring some plants to share and take some new flowers home to plant. This meeting will be advertised by Outdoor Chattanooga as a public program, so everyone is invited to our 2nd annual NABA plant swap. You can bring any type plant you wish. They don't have to be butterfly nectar or host plants. Come join the fun and get some new stuff for the yard!



All photos this column by Mike O'Brien

DIRECTIONS: Outdoor Chattanooga is located adjacent to Coolidge Park in North Chattanooga. From Highway 27, take the Manufacturer's Rd. exit - go towards town. When road T's, turn right. Go to the 3rd light and turn right (towards Chattanooga Theatre Center). Turn right at the first road. Outdoor Chattanooga will be on the left just before you pass under the Walnut Street bridge.

Upcoming Field Trips:

Friday, March 30, 11:00am
Tennessee River Gorge
Spring wildflowers and butterflies
Leader: Bill Haley - (423) 326-9248 or (423) 756-4106 for information
Meet: Parking lot of Signal Mountain Road Bi-Lo supermarket

We'll explore areas along River Canyon Rd. in the TN River Gorge. If the weather is especially good, there should be many butterflies, and this could turn into a spring count if there are enough people. If weather is cloudy or too cool, we'll still have many lovely spring wildflowers to enjoy. Bring binoculars and if sunny, wear a hat, bring sunblock, drink and snacks.

Saturday, April 7, 1:00pm
Enterprise South Nature Park
(near new VW plant)
Target species: Yucca Giant Skippers
Leader: David Spicer - (423) 505-8435 for information or directions
Meet: In large parking lot about a mile past the Enterprise South Nature Park Visitors Center.

Dave found a population of Yucca Giant Skippers in this area last year and it was the first documentation of this species in Hamilton County. These very large, chubby, interesting butterflies have been seen in other areas of Tennessee in the past couple of weeks, so we are hoping to find several. Wear comfortable walking shoes, and be ready for a moderate hike to the site.



Yucca Giant Skipper
Megathymus yuccae

Photo by Dave Spicer, 2011

Around The Puddle
by Bill Haley

What Surprises Does 2012 Hold?

In 2011 our area of the southeast had a cold winter and a very late spring. We were still searching for early spring butterflies in mid to late March. Good butterfly watching didn't really arrive until early April.

Flip forward to 2012 and conditions could not be more different. Butterflies were already being seen in February and as I write this on March 28, we are seeing species that usually don't put in an appearance for another month or more. Temperatures have topped 80 degrees!

On Sunday March 24, while working in my backyard preparing pots to attempt layering some Dutchman's Pipevine, I was pleased to see a fresh American Lady land on a clover blossom nearby. When it flew, I noticed a much smaller butterfly chasing it. To my surprise, it was a male Sachem! Some years I don't see my first Sachem until May and they are often very uncommon even on our first June butterfly count. Wow!

Dogwoods are blooming in my North Chattanooga neighborhood, also a bit ahead of schedule. This event is often closely tied with "dogwood winter", a cold snap with sometimes almost wintry weather. (Remember the Great Blizzard of 1993, which happened on March 15?) This year we had a couple of cooler days, and then the temperatures went right back to the upper 70's and 80's. Was that the extent of dogwood winter in 2012?

Beware! We are yet to see "blackberry winter", which happens about the time the blackberries begin to flower. Just a short 2-3 years back we experienced a hard, killing frost on April 30. All the trees and plants that had leafed out early that year were nipped in the bud, so to speak. Suddenly it was like autumn in the spring. In July people were raking the dead leaves from the aftermath of that freeze. Butterfly populations also took a downturn because of that event. Weather can be crazy and it certainly isn't the same from year to year. Let's hope we don't have a surprise like that this blackberry winter!

Join us for field trips and counts this season and we'll see what surprises 2012 holds.



Gemmed Satyr
Cyllopsis gemma
March 24, 2012

Photo by
David Spicer



Pipevine Swallowtail
Battus philenor

March 18, 2012

Photo by
Mike O'Brien



Pink Dogwood
(hostplant for Spring Azure)

Photo by
Mike O'Brien

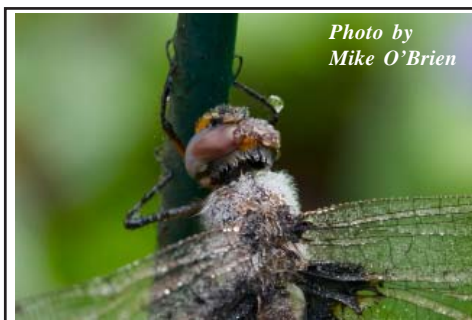


Photo by
Mike O'Brien

Nope. Not a butterfly! Close-up of a baskettail dragonfly covered in dew.