



Photo by  
Jeff Basham

# On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

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## NABA Fall Seasonal Butterfly Count Totals

### Tennessee River Gorge Fall Seasonal Butterfly Count totals Saturday, August 11, 2012

The Tennessee River Gorge fall seasonal count was held on Saturday, August 11. We split into three count parties and participants were Harold Birch, Bill Haley, Vicky and Jack Leather, Scott and Dave Spicer, Carl and Beverly Swafford, Libby Wolfe and Nancy Williams. Temperatures ranged from 69-87 F, with the sun out 75%-100% of the time. An excellent total of 54 species was tallied. A huge surprise was the discovery of 19 Dainty Sulphurs, nectaring on sneezeweed, in a field on Moccasin Bend. Dave and Scott Spicer also found 2 in the Sequatchie Valley. This was a new species for the 18 year old TN River Gorge count. Skipper numbers and diversity were also very high, with 22 species located.

**Totals:** Pipevine Swallowtail 24, Black Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 80, Spicebush Sw. 27, Dark Sw. sp. 4, Checkered White 1, Clouded Sulphur 1, Orange Su. 3, Cloudless Su. 30, Little Yellow 13, Sleepy Orange 7, Dainty Su. 21, Gray Hairstreak 16, Red-banded Ha. 6, E. Tailed Blue 61, Summer Azure 2, American Snout 10, Gulf Fritillary 12, Variegated Fr. 15, Great Spangled Fr. 3, Pearl Crescent 79, Question Mark 4, Anglewing sp. 2, Am. Lady 2, Painted Lady 14, Red Admiral 3, Common Buckeye 218, Red-sp. Purple 2, Hackberry Emperor 38, Tawny Emp. 4, Southern Pearly-Eye 1, Carolina Satyr 42, Common Wood Nymph 4, Monarch 3, Silver-sp. Skipper 34, Hoary Edge 21, N. Cloudywing 10, Hayhurst's Scallopwing 1, Horace's Duskywing 13, Zarucco Duskywing 1, Wild Indigo Duskywing 7, Com., Checkered Sk. 9, Com. Sootywing 1, Clouded Sk. 21, Least Sk. 4, Fiery Sk. 64, Crossline Sk. 9, S. Broken-Dash 5, N. Broken-Dash 4, Little Glassywing 16, Sachem 793, Zabulon Sk. 24, Dun Sk. 10, Com. Roadside Sk. 1, Eufala Sk. 2, Ocola Sk. Immatures: 1 Gulf Fritillary and 1 Red-spotted Purple caterpillar.

**Total: 54 species, 1804 individuals.**

## Soddy-Daisy, TN Fall Seasonal Butterfly Count Totals Tuesday, August 14, 2012

The Soddy-Daisy fall seasonal count was conducted by David Spicer, Vicky Leather, Nancy Williams and Bill Haley on Tuesday, August 14. In contrast with the summer count on June 30, which featured a blazing sun all day and temperatures reaching 106 F, this count began with conditions that didn't bode well for a count at all - completely overcast, foggy and cool. We didn't see the sun all morning long, and only part of the afternoon. Temperature ranged from 68 to 86 F. Despite what we thought was poor weather, we saw butterflies at every stop all day, finishing with 41 species. This included an amazing ten species that we did not find on the River Gorge count, with 54 species, three days earlier.

Probably the best find of the day, occurred at Daisy United Methodist Church only fifteen minutes after we started. A female Dion Skipper was spotted on a dark purple butterfly bush. It was a life butterfly for everyone except Dave, who had found this species in areas on the other side of the river during a couple of previous Soddy-Daisy counts.

Only 15 skipper species were located, but six were not found on the Aug. 11 count. If you ever wonder how many skippers you MIGHT be able to find in the 2nd week of August, we found 28 total species between the two counts.

**Totals:** Pipevine Swallowtail 3, Black Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 18, Spicebush Sw. 4, Cloudless Sulphur 4, Little Yellow 4, Sleepy Orange 8, Gray Hairstreak 4, Red-banded Ha. 3, E. Tailed Blue 37, Summer Azure 1, Gulf Fritillary 15, Variegated Fr. 2, Diana Fr. 1, Great Spangled Fr. 2, Pearl Crescent 16, Question Mark 1, Painted Lady 1, Com. Buckeye 24, Red-sp. Purple 1, N. Pearly-Eye 1, Creole Pearly-Eye 1, Gemmed Satyr 1, Com. Wood Nymph 5, Monarch 2, Silver-sp. Skipper 2, Long-tailed Skipper 1, Golden-banded Sk. 1, Wild Indigo Duskywing 4, Clouded Sk. 7, Fiery Sk. 12, Tawny-edged Sk. 2, Crossline Sk. 2, S. Broken-Dash 1, Little Glassywing 1, Sachem 791, Delaware Sk. 1, Zabulon Sk. 1, Dion Sk. 1, Lace-winged Roadside Sk. 1, Eufala Sk. 1. Immatures: 2 Silver-sp. Sk. caterpillars on kudzu.  
**Total: 41 species, 989 individuals.**

## Around the Puddle

### A Confusion of Skippers

- or -

#### Got Sneezweed?

Moments before we entered the old radio control field on Moccasin Bend, I told the counters who accompanied me, "Find something that is NOT a Sachem". It quickly became apparent that there were swarms of skippers nectaring on the pretty yellow blooms of the abundant sneezweed growing along the dirt road. Probably 95% were Sachems.

I often repeat that mantra when there are tons of skippers around, and it is true. In order to have a good species list, you need to find lots of different skipper species. It is also easier said than done. Even Sachems can be a challenge.

We must have presented a funny picture as everyone trained their close-focus binoculars at the ground. Every foot-tall blooming clump had to be looked at as we attempted to identify tiny and very energetic butterflies. The high-strung Skippers are much more likely to dart around from flower to flower than to sit still and be viewed at leisure.

To make our task even more difficult, one skipper can look pretty much like any other skipper, especially to the untrained eye. They are the sparrows of the insect world, many identifications resting on one tiny field mark - or the lack of a tiny field mark. And the darn things don't sit still. Just when you get focused, oops, that Sachem just scared it away. To say it can be maddening is not much of an exaggeration.

but sort through them we did, finding at least 16 species in this one field. It was *always* challenging, it was *often* puzzling, it was *fun*, and after an hour of staring through binoculars, looking for something "not a Sachem" - it was *tiring*, both to the eyes and to the brain. There seemed to be a never-ending supply of constantly moving skippers.

Because of this experience, and one very like it on the Soddy-Daisy count three days later, also in a field clothed in blooming sneezweed, I'd like to propose a new term for such a skipper abundance. What we were dealing with was obviously a "**Confusion of skippers**"!

I feel this very fitting term should come into general useage among butterfly enthusiasts nationwide, but even if it doesn't, I plan to continue using it. And I you have my permission to use it too.

## Tennessee River Gorge Photos, Aug. 11

Dainty Sulphur  
*Nathalis iole*



Moccasin Bend  
Hamilton Co.

Photo by  
Nancy Williams

Dainty Sulphur

Sequatchie Valley  
Marion Co.



Photo by  
David Spicer

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Eufala Skipper  
*Lerodea eufala*



Photo by  
Nancy Williams



Hayhurst's  
Scallopwing  
*Staphylus  
hayhurstii*  
photographed by  
Dave and Scott  
Spicer in the  
Sequatchie Valley.

Photos from TN River Gorge, Aug. 11

Photos from Soddy-Daisy, Aug. 14



How often do you see a Pearly-Eye of any kind with its wings spread wide? Almost never. On the Tennessee River Gorge count, David Spicer found a very cooperative **Southern Pearly-Eye** (two photos in left column). He got a shot of the underside, which, with the solid orange antennal clubs, helped confirm the identification. It then spread its wings and posed for a shot of the dorsal side, something he, and most other butterfly watchers had never seen. Then on the Soddy-Daisy count three days later he and Bill Haley found a **Northern Pearly-Eye** (two photos in right column), which also spread its wings to soak up some sun and pose for a "glamour shot". Too bad the Creole Pearly-Eye they'd seen earlier wasn't so cooperative!

More Photos from Tennessee River Gorge,  
Aug. 11 and Soddy-Daisy, Aug. 14, 2012

Photos from Mike O'Brien and Dave Spicer



**Sleepy Orange**  
*Eurema nicippe*

Photo by  
David Spicer

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**Eastern  
Black  
Swallowtail  
caterpillar**

Photo by  
Mike O'Brien



**Golden-banded Skipper**  
*Autochton cellus*

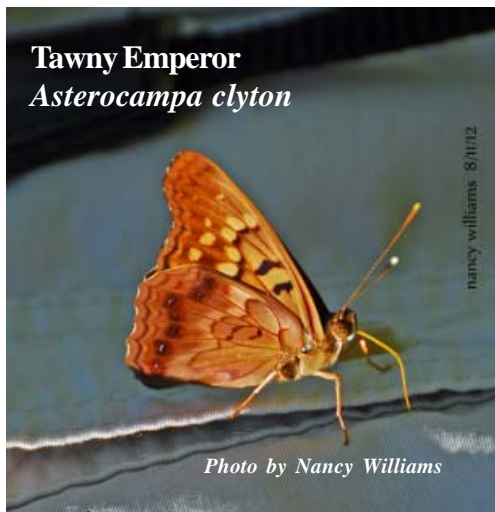
Photo by  
David Spicer

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**Eastern  
Black  
Swallowtail  
chrysalis**

Photo by  
Mike O'Brien



**Tawny Emperor**  
*Asterocampa clyton*

Photo by Nancy Williams

nancy williams 8/11/12



**Broad-winged  
Skipper**  
*Poanes  
viator*

Photo by  
David  
Spicer

© 2012 David Spicer

A **BIG Thank You** to all the people who contribute the photographs that I use in this newsletter. Not only do you document the species, both common and rare, that we find on counts, you help all of us enjoy the special beauty of these flying jewels!