



Photo by  
Mike O'Brien

# On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

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## SPRING SEASONAL COUNT Tennessee River Gorge, TN Thursday, April 3, 2014

Meet: 10:00 at the Signal Mountain Road Bi-Lo parking lot; Leader: Bill Haley (423) 326-9248 or wgh@tnaqua.org. Cost: \$3.00 per participant. Please note, that this is a mid-week count!

The first butterfly count of the year will be on Thursday, April 3rd in the Tennessee River Gorge count circle. We will meet in the parking lot of the Signal Mountain Bi-Lo and caravan from there.

After the strange winter we've experienced, keep your fingers crossed for the weather to cooperate with a warm, sunny day. By scheduling a very early spring count, it is hoped that we can document some of the earliest butterflies of the year, such as the Falcate Orangetip (shown above). Other early species with relatively short flight periods are the West Virginia White, Juvenal's Duskywing, Sleepy Duskywing, Dreamy Duskywing and Pepper and Salt Skipper. If Mother Nature cooperates, we should find a good number of other species as well, but it remains to be seen what effect this very cold winter has had on the early butterfly populations. If we have enough people, we may split up into parties to better cover the 15 mile diameter count circle. As always, there is a \$3 cost per person, which goes to NABA to offset publication expenses of the count summaries from all over North America.



Photo by  
Jeff Basham

The small **Pepper and Salt Skipper**, *Amblyscirtes hegon*, is one of the earliest emerging non-spread wing skipper species. We will look for them on the spring counts.

## FIELD TRIP

Sunday, April 6, 2:00-4:30

Blue Blazes Trail Area, Moccasin Bend

Meet: 2:00 at the Blue Blazes Trail parking lot, off Moccasin Bend Road.

Leader: Bill Haley. For info call (423) 326-9248, or e-mail wgh@tnaqua.org.

What butterflies might be found at Blue Blazes in early April? Falcate Orangetips and Juvenal's Duskywing should certainly be found, along with several other species if it is a nice, sunny day. We'll explore the area around the parking lot, roadsides along Moccasin Bend Rd. and nearby fields. Wear comfortable walking shoes and dress for the weather. **Note: If it is raining, 100% cloudy, or temperatures are less than 60 degrees F, the field trip will be cancelled.** Butterflies, (and most butterfly watchers), don't really like those types of conditions, and will not show up. Bill will be in church until noon that day, so please do not call before then. His cell phone won't be on.

## SPRING SEASONAL COUNT Soddy-Daisy, TN Thursday, May 1

Meet: 10:00 in parking lot behind the Soddy-Daisy Subway sandwich shop. Leader: Bill Haley (see contact info above).

Mark your calendar and take part in the second butterfly count of 2014. More information next month.

### 2014 BUTTERFLY COUNT SCHEDULE:

Thurs., April 3, TN River Gorge, TN (spring seasonal)  
Thurs., May 1, Soddy-Daisy, TN (spring seasonal)  
Sat., June 7, 2014: TN River Gorge, TN  
Thurs., June 12, 2014: Soddy-Daisy, TN  
Thurs., June 26, 2014: Lookout Mountain, GA  
Thurs., July 24: Stevenson, AL  
Sat., Aug. 2: TN River Gorge, TN (fall seasonal)  
Thurs., Aug. 28: Soddy-Daisy, TN (fall seasonal)

## Around the Puddle

by Bill Haley

### What Surprises Will 2014 Hold?

Will we have butterflies in 2014? The answer to that question is a definite yes. In fact butterflies have already been reported around Tennessee during some of our February warm spells, when I began this article. Libby Wolfe reported seeing Cabbage White and Clouded Sulphurs at the Brainerd Levee on a nice 70+ degree February day a little over a week ago.

What cannot be so easily answered is if we will see butterflies in "normal" numbers this year. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure what "normal" means any more. Butterfly populations can fluctuate greatly from year to year.

To me, the weather patterns seem to be the biggest wild card. Remember that we had a very rainy, wet, cool spring in 2013. For much of the butterfly season, we did not see large numbers of certain, normally abundant, individual species. Based on 2013 butterfly count data it seemed the species diversity we find in some years was down too. Species that we expected to show up at specific times of the season were behind what we considered "normal" by a month or more. Not until until late summer did we see an abundance of butterflies and great diversity.

Turn the page to winter 2014. We had some really frigid cold spells. We had a 1" blizzard that totally paralyzed traffic - when school wasn't let out until it was already too late - causing some kids to have to spend the night at their school because parents just couldn't get there to pick them up. Believe it or not, I actually saw a stand-up paddleboarder in the river without a shirt and wearing only a pair of shorts in 20 degree temperatures during that storm. (A future candidate for a Darwin Award?) Then we had our big 7-10" snow - beautiful in the morning, mostly gone by the following afternoon - with the roads perfectly driveable almost the whole time. Strangely, that snow kept kids out of school for most of a week. (OK, granted that was a knee-jerk reaction to the earlier 1" storm fiasco). We had temperatures of over 70 degrees in February and people came out in droves wearing t-shirts and shorts. March has been a real mixed bag too.

Now, as we struggle out of what a friend termed, "An old-time winter", we wonder what is ahead. We will just have to wait and see.

And that is why we do butterfly counts.

### March Butterfly Sightings:

From David Spicer's e-mail on Saturday, March 22:

"We drove around Enterprise South Nature Park this afternoon. We had a number of Falcate Orangetips in various places. At one flowering fruit tree we had three Eastern Commas and a Duskywing. I never did get a look at the underside of the wings so I don't know if it was a Horace's or Juvenal's.

At a Redbud tree we had Spring Azure, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, a hairstreak that was probably a Gray and a Juvenal's Duskywing. Along the road we had a couple of Mourning Cloaks.

At Standifer Gap Marsh we had a Clouded Sulphur."

David Spicer  
Ooltewah, Hamilton Co.



Mike O'Brien sent in these two great shots of an Eastern Comma, taken at his place in Valley Head, Alabama on March 10. The Comma overwinters as an adult, and quite a few have been reported early this spring, venturing out on sunny days.