



Photo by
Mike O'Brien

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

May 2015

Volume 9, Number 2

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

Soddy-Daisy Spring Seasonal Count Totals

The Soddy-Daisy spring seasonal count was held on a mostly cloudy, windy, cool day that was not particularly good for butterfly activity. Since the weatherman predicted thunderstorms on Saturday, April 25, but better weather and warmer temperatures the next day, it was decided that we would move the count to Sunday, April 26.

It turned out that we would have probably done much better if we'd kept it on Saturday, when it cleared in the afternoon and the butterflies came out. (See Bill's totals from Ivy Academy between 1:00 and 3:00 that afternoon.)

What lesson did we learn from this? Weathermen can be wrong!

Intrepid counters were Libby Wolfe, Nancy Williams, David Spicer, Judee Spicer and Bill Haley. Nobody got started before noon, and as luck would have it, from that point the weather grew steadily worse until it was completely overcast and windy. Counting was over by 3:30. Two parties put in 6.5 hours of effort, finding the species below:

Totals: Spicebush Swallowtail 4, E. Tiger Swallowtail 4, Cloudless Sulphur 1, E. Tailed-Blue 18, Variegated Fritillary 1, Pearl Crescent 40, American Lady 1, Red Admiral 3, Red-spotted Purple 7, Gemmed Satyr 1, Carolina Satyr 13, Silver-spotted Skipper 2, Juvenal's Duskywing 4, Common Checkered Skipper 1, Sachem 1, unid. swallowtail sp. 1, unid. duskywing sp. 5, unid. grass skipper sp. 1.

Total species: 15, Individuals 108



Photo by
Libby Wolfe

This fresh **Gemmed Satyr**, *Callyopsis gemma*, was the highlight of the day for Nancy Williams, Libby Wolfe and Bill Haley. It was found on Bakewell Mountain.

Tennessee River Gorge Spring Seasonal Totals

The Tennessee River Gorge spring seasonal count was held on Monday, May 4 and the weather couldn't have been much better for butterfly counting. We enjoyed temperatures between 73 and 82 F, light wind and plenty of sunshine. It was a complete opposite of the weather at Soddy-Daisy the week before, and the day's totals showed it.

Counters in two parties: Mike O'Brien, Harold Birch, Nancy Williams, Susan Schott, David Spicer, Scott Spicer and Bill Haley put in 13.5 hours of effort.

Totals: Pipevine Swallowtail 3, Zebra Sw. 2, Spicebush Sw. 10, E. Tiger Sw. 35, Checkered White 1, West Virginia White 2, Orange Sulphur 6, Cloudless Sulphur 3, Eastern Tailed-Blue 26, Spring Azure 6, American Snout 3, Pearl Crescent 37, Question Mark 1, American Lady 3, Red Admiral 3, Red-spotted Purple 61, Viceroy 1, Goatweed Leafwing 1, Hackberry Emperor 1, Gemmed Satyr 7, Carolina Satyr 19, Silver-spotted Skipper 13, N. Cloudywing 3, Juvenal's Duskywing 22, Wild Indigo Duskywing 1, Least Skipper 3, Sachem 6, Zabulon Sk. 4, Dusted Skipper 1, Pepper and Salt Sk. 7, Common Roadside Sk. 2, unid. duskywing sp. 19.

Total species: 31, Individuals 310

Ivy Academy, Saturday, April 25: Bill Haley led a butterfly walk at Ivy Academy from 1-3pm for an Environmental Education Week activity. The weather was rainy all morning long, but miraculously the sun came out at 1:00 so the walk was on! **Totals:** Spicebush Swallowtail 1, Giant Swallowtail 1, Red-banded Hairstreak 1, E. Tailed-Blue 15, Variegated Fritillary 1, Pearl Crescent 8, Carolina Satyr 1, Silver-sp. Skipper 1, Juvenal's Duskywing 1, Common Checkered Skipper 1, Common Sootywing 1. Four species not found the next day!

2015 BUTTERFLY COUNT SCHEDULE

Sat., June 6: TN River Gorge, TN

Sat., June 13: Soddy-Daisy, TN

Thurs., June 25: Lookout Mountain, GA

Thurs., July 23: Stevenson, AL

Thurs., Aug. 13: TN River Gorge, TN (fall seasonal)

Sat., Aug. 22: Soddy-Daisy, TN (fall seasonal)

Around the Puddle

by Bill Haley

A Tale of Two Counts

I kicked off the 2015 butterfly counting season with a lot of uncertainty. I've learned through experience that spring count weather can be a gamble. You never know what to expect.

This year, I ditched a planned April 4 count, mainly because I was sick, I was at the end of working 12 days straight, and I was worn out. I just didn't have it in me to go another day. I badly needed some rest more than I needed to count butterflies. Naturally it proved to be sunny and fairly warm that day, and probably would have been a pretty good day to count.

My next opportunity to do a count was Saturday, April 25. I reasoned that the later date would mean milder weather and more butterflies. Wrong! "Blackberry winter", our second annual spring cold snap after we ditch the bulk of winter weather, decided to pay a visit at just the wrong time. That day thunderstorms were forecast in advance of an approaching cold front.

I changed the count to the next day, and the weather was much worse than April 4...and April 25 too. Oh well! Read all about it on page 1.

I hoped we'd have better weather for the Tennessee River Gorge count, the second scheduled count of the year. Monday, May 4 dawned clear and sunny with warm temperatures destined for the low 80's. It was the type of day we'd hoped for, but didn't get, the previous week.

Butterflies were in abundance everywhere we went. The trip into the Tennessee River Gorge got the day off to a good start with some nice species, such as Pepper and Salt Skipper, and a very late West Virginia White. There was an abundance of Red-spotted Purples and Eastern Tiger Swallowtails.

Next stop was Raccoon Mountain. A highlight for me was getting to take Harold, Nancy, Mike and Susan to "Bill's Rock", my very first hawkwatching lookout, which I hadn't visited since 1993. While enjoying the view of downtown Chattanooga below us, a Zebra Swallowtail nectared on blackberry blooms 10 feet away. A Dusted Skipper landed briefly, but zoomed away, only seen by me. The Laurel Point picnic area produced seven Gemmed Satyrs (four in view at once), as well as Common Roadside Skipper and other goodies. It was a great day!



Photo by
Libby Wolfe

Cryptic Coloration: This butterfly was almost invisible to Nancy, Libby and Bill, even though at times they were less than 3 feet away from it. This **American Lady, *Vanessa virginiensis***, would fly up and show its orange dorsal colors briefly, then land again in the gravels. The disruptive coloration of its ventral side hid it very effectively.



Photo by
Mike O'Brien

Where's the Green? Mike O'Brien has already seen over 30 species in his yard in Valley Head, Alabama. Mike sent in this photo of a **Juniper Hairstreak, *Callophrys gryneus***, which is missing most of the normally-seen green color. The caterpillars feed on Eastern Red Cedar, and the green on their forewing is almost a perfect match for the color of the tree's foliage. This one was a little worn and you could barely see a dusting of green scales remaining.

Carolina Satyr, *Hermeuptychia sosybius*, is a butterfly with a scientific name longer than its wingspan. It is another species that blends in when resting.



UPCOMING BUTTERFLY COUNTS

Saturday, June 6

21st Annual

Tennessee River Gorge, TN

Meet: 9:30 at the Signal Mountain Bi-Lo parking lot. **Compiler:** Bill Haley, (423) 326-9248, or e-mail wgh@tnaqua.org

Join us for the 21st annual Tennessee River Gorge count! You *do not* have to be an expert to help with a butterfly count. Extra eyes are always appreciated and you'll be with experienced people to help with the identification of species you may not be familiar with. The weather will probably be hot, but be aware that we may walk through some weedy fields, so long pants and close-toed shoes are always recommended. Bring a hat, sunscreen, bug spray, plenty of liquids to drink and something to snack on. Close-focus binoculars will be very helpful if you have them. If you can't stay with us all day, that is all right too. Plan to do one or more counts this summer and sharpen your butterfly finding and identifying skills. A **\$3.00 fee per counter** goes to NABA to help defray their publication expenses.

Saturday, June 13

19th Annual Soddy-Daisy, TN

Meet: 9:30 at the Daisy United Methodist Church, 9508 Old Dayton Pike, Soddy-Daisy, TN. **Compiler:** Bill Haley, (423) 326-9248, wgh@tnaqua.org

Directions from Chattanooga: Take Hwy. 27 N from Chattanooga. Take the Harrison Lane exit and turn left on Harrison Lane. When road T's, turn right. Continue up hill and in less than 1/2 mile, the church is on the right at the top of the hill. (Look for all the flowers in the yard!)

Everyone is invited to help with the 19th annual Soddy-Daisy count. We'll caravan from the church in search of butterflies. Please read suggestions above on what to wear and things to bring. **\$3.00 fee per counter.**

Thursday, June 25

16th Annual Lookout Mountain, GA

Meet: 9:30 at the International Towing and Recovery Museum on South Broad Street in Chattanooga. **Compiler:** Bill Haley (see contact info above).

Note that this count will be on a **Thursday!** Please come and help us out if you are free. We may be joined by some folks from a brand new NABA chapter in Georgia for the 16th annual Lookout Mountain, GA count. It'll be hot, so prepare by bringing lots of liquids to stay hydrated! **\$3.00 fee per counter.**

David Spicer took this photo of an American Lady on the Tennessee River Gorge spring count. When you see the vibrant orange on this specimen, you wonder why the one on page 2 was so hard to see. The lighting may have had something to do with it. This one was seen on a nice sunny day. The other day was dark and overcast.



Sachem (female)

Atalopedes campestris

Photo by
David Spicer



Sachems seem to have emerged early this year. Some years we don't find them until mid-June.

Eastern Tailed-Blue

Everes comyntas

Photo by
Mike O'Brien



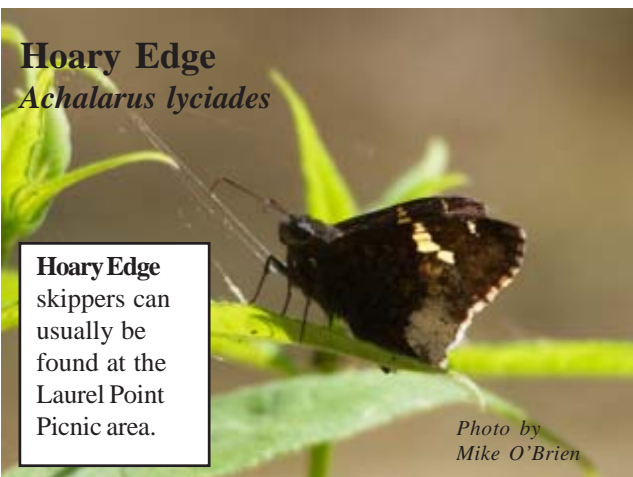
Tiny, but beautiful - the Eastern Tailed-Blue.



It was nice to find this tiny **Common Roadside Skipper** (they really aren't all that common around here) on Raccoon Mountain during the Tennessee River Gorge spring count.



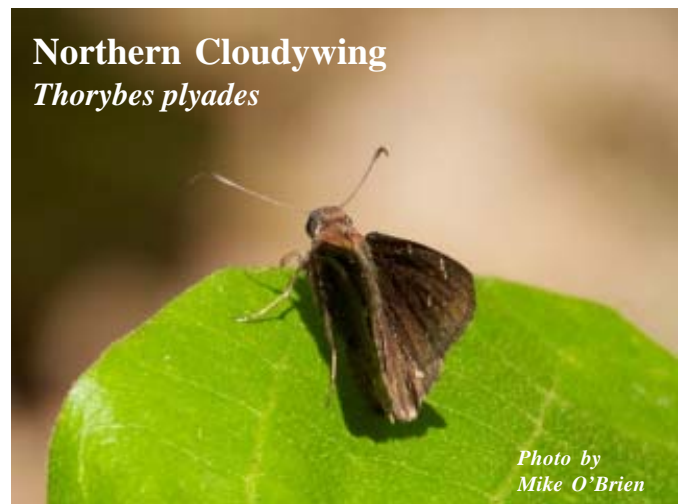
We hit the jackpot on **Gemmed Satyrs** at the Laurel Point Picnic area atop Raccoon Mountain. This has long been one of Bill's go-to spots for this species, but it was a big surprise to find seven of them that day! Four were flitting about our legs at the same time in one spot.



Hoary Edge skippers can usually be found at the Laurel Point Picnic area.



Monarch Mimic: Many people who do not know their butterflies well would take one look at the **Viceroy**, *Limenitis archippus*, above and conclude they were looking at a Monarch. This is a type of mimicry called Batesian mimicry. I like this quote from Butterflies of the East Coast by Cech and Tudor, "Sly magician that it is, the Viceroy engages in many deceptions. Its eggs mimic hostplant leaf galls, its caterpillars resemble bird droppings, its overwintering chamber (hibernaculum) looks like a dead leaf and adults closely mimic toxic Danaids (Monarchs and Queens). Birds trained to avoid Monarchs also avoid Viceroys." This freshly-emerged Viceroy was found at our farthest stop on River Canyon Road, deep in the Tennessee River Gorge. It made it worth the long drive!



As you can see from the photos on this page, not all butterflies are colorful. many are quite content to be shades of brown, which helps them blend in with the forest floor. Pictured above is a **Northern Cloudywing** basking on a leaf.

Page 1, upper left photo: Another camouflage expert, the **Goatweed Leafwing**, *Anaea andria*, looks like a dull brown leaf when resting, but is brilliant orange on the dorsal side. It was photographed in Mike O'Brien's yard in Valley Head, AL.