

Photo by
Mike O'Brien



On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

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Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

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. You'll be with experienced people to help with the identification of species you may not be familiar with. (And you may find that even the most experienced people still struggle with difficult identifications!) Please be aware that we may walk through some weedy fields, so long pants and close-toed shoes are always recommended. The weather will probably be hot. Bring a hat, sunscreen, bug spray, a cooler with plenty of liquids to drink and something to snack on. Close-focus binoculars are helpful if you have them.

What if you can only stay out for a couple of hours? If the heat or your schedule won't allow a full day of counting, that is all right. You may leave when you wish.

Help with 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 church's 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! Please see the TN River Gorge count for other things you may need to bring that day. **\$3.00 fee per counter.**

Lookout Mountain Count Add-on: The Tennessee Aquarium has a new club called Nature Nuts, especially for kids 5-12 years old. Bill Haley and Julia Gregory are the leaders. For 15 years they ran the Bug Club, and that club has now gone through metamorphosis and become Nature Nuts. The regular meeting date is the 4th Thursday of each month from 5:00-7:00, so the Nature Nuts field trip for June will be to come down and look for butterflies within the Lookout Mountain count circle. After a full day of counting, Bill will be staying and searching for *more* butterflies. His plan is to start a new butterfly tally sheet, and if some of the same places are visited, he can decide if new species, or extra numbers need to be added to the day's totals. Perhaps they will discover a species we don't see. The kids or their parents will not be charged a count fee, but since Bill will be with them, if they find something new it *will* count.

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

You Never Know!

I know that reading the "Around the Puddle" feature is at the top of your list when you get a new "On the Wing" newsletter, but I hope you've read page one first. If you haven't read page one yet, go ahead, I'll wait.....

OK, now that you are up to speed, I'd like to talk about the Nature Nuts "extension" at the end of the afternoon on the Lookout Mountain, GA count.

Those who have been members of Tennessee Valley NABA for awhile have probably noticed over the years that I often tack on butterfly-related field experiences for folks who are probably not butterfly watchers. While counters go about their business in other parts of a count circle, I break away and entertain folks who may not have ever looked closely, or even really noticed, the butterflies around them.

Sometimes these excursions have taken the form of a Tennessee Aquarium members program, a free-to-the-public butterfly walk in a state park or looking for butterflies in Coolidge or Renaissance Parks in downtown Chattanooga. I always make sure the activity is within that day's count circle so the people participating get a little taste of what citizen science is all about.

From 5:00 to 7:00 the afternoon of the Lookout Mountain count, probably long after most folks are burned-out, I'll be taking Nature Nuts kids and their parents out to look for butterflies.

You just never know when a spark may be ignited and a lifetime passion will be born. When I was in the fourth grade, I decided to join the 4-H Club. It was all about raising livestock - ducks, chickens, pigs. I lived in the country, but we raised none of that stuff and weren't going to start. Lucky for me they had one area that I could fully participate in, the study and collecting of insects. That summer I ranged far and wide (*parents actually let kids do that in those days*), chasing butterflies and other insects with a homemade net my mother crafted from sheer curtain material. When I wasn't swinging a baseball bat, I was swinging my net and I had a ball. Thus started my lifelong interest in butterflies.

I feel strongly that as a NABA chapter, fostering an appreciation of nature and the butterflies we love should be at the core of our mission, and I'll do that once again on June 25.

NABA BUTTERFLY COUNTS 2014 REPORT

While putting this month's newsletter together, I was pleased to find the 2014 Report from NABA in my mail slot at work. It contains data from all NABA butterfly counts in North America conducted from March-November last year. Anyone can purchase a copy for only \$7. When paying the \$3 count fee add an extra \$7 and give your full mailing address. When the count is entered electronically, a box is checked by your name and your payment will be included in the check sent to NABA. You'll receive your copy around mid-May next year. The costs of producing this document is where part of your \$3 butterfly count fees go. I order one every year.

There is a treasure trove of information in this spiral-bound book. I learned that there were 439 butterfly counts - 38 spring seasonal (March-May), 340 Fourth of July (June-July), and 61 fall seasonal (Aug.-Nov.). There were 24 Canadian counts and none in Mexico. The 415 U.S. counts were held in 45 states, plus Washington D.C.. No counts were reported from Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island or Kentucky.

Kentucky breaks my heart, as I'm the NABA Appalachians area editor - responsible for West Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky. No reports have been received from Kentucky in many years. Surely there are butterfly watchers in that state who could create a new count circle and conduct a NABA butterfly count! It's not rocket science. If you know someone in Kentucky who might do this, please contact me with their contact information.

Florida (as usual) led the nation with 59 counts, followed by California with 31. Texas and **Tennessee** were next, tied at 26. The fact Tennessee is one of the national leaders is something to be proud of folks, and would not be possible without your continued help.

It is always interesting to check the maximum counts for individual species. I eagerly look this over to see if we saw the most of *anything* last year out of all those counts conducted across the country. I was delighted to discover that the spring Tennessee River Gorge count (*only 9 total species*) had the most West Virginia Whites (12); Falcate Orangetips (14), and Juvenal's Duskywings (78). The Soddy-Daisy spring count tallied the most Pepper and Salt Skippers (12), and was tied with Crex Meadows, Wisconsin for most Mottled Duskywings (1!). Only two other Tennessee counts, both in west Tennessee, made the list. Meeman-Shelby Forest, TN had the most Phaon Crescents (290) and Clifton Bend, TN had the most Yucca Giant Skippers (2). In NABA's Southeast region (AL, AR, LA, MS), Stevenson, Alabama had the highest number of species per party-hour (4.67).

We don't do counts specifically to garner these records, but it is neat to see that we were at the top several times over the other 438 North American counts!



Photo by Mike O'Brien

GREAT VIEW for both hawks *and* butterflies! Pictured are Bill Haley, Harold Birch, Susan Schott and Nancy Williams. They were perched atop “Bill’s Rock” on Raccoon Mountain, enjoying the nice panoramic view of downtown Chattanooga during the Tennessee River Gorge spring count. What you can’t see in this photo is a beautiful Zebra Swallowtail nectaring on blackberry blooms 10 feet in front of them. Bill also saw a Dusted Skipper there. “Bill’s Rock” is his fond nickname for the large rock perched near the base of a TVA transmission tower - the first hawk lookout he discovered and manned, way back in 1992, the year before he founded the Soddy Mountain Hawk Lookout. It was Bill’s first trip back there in 23 years! They also got fantastic views of a male Prairie Warbler, who approached to within 6 feet of where they stood. (Yes, we occasionally look at things other than butterflies!)



Another insect we like to look at - beside butterflies: Many butterfly watchers also enjoy seeing dragonflies. This perched female **Spangled Skimmer** was spotted in the Tennessee River Gorge during the spring count.



Great Spangled Fritillary
Speyeria cybele

Photo by Mike O'Brien

Mike O'Brien photographed this shot of a Great Spangled Fritillary on butterfly weed blooms in his yard. Mike and his wife Marion have worked the past 11 years to make their habitat wildlife-friendly, and they are now reaping the benefits. Mike estimates they have at least 20 species of birds nesting on their property, including a Summer Tanager nest in a Japanese maple near their house. They’ve already seen 42 butterfly species on their place in 2015! Mike attributes this to Marion’s “eagle eyes”, and growing expertise at spotting and identifying butterflies..



ALL THE NECTAR YOU CAN DRINK! Someone forgot to put out the HUMMINGBIRDS ONLY sign at Mike O'Brien’s place! This **Coral Hairstreak**, *Satyrrium titus*, has found a nectar source that seemingly never dries up - a hummingbird feeder.. It sure does make you feel sorry for the neighborhood hummingbirds! After this butterfly drank its fill, there was probably nothing left for them!

Coral Hairstreaks are a bit different from the “typical hairstreak. The most notable difference is the lack of tails on the hindwing. This trait and the neat row of red-orange (coral) spots near the margin of the hindwing make them relatively easy to identify. Unlike most other hairstreaks, they have no blue area (thecla spot) on the hindwing. They are often found nectaring on orange butterflyweed, but will also use many other nectar sources, as this photo proves.