



Photo by
Mike O'Brien

On The Wing

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Memorable photos from September

Last "On the Wing" issue of 2015

This will be the last newsletter sent out this year. Your editor will take a break until March when we'll be getting geared up for another spring, summer and fall butterfly season.

In October we are creeping towards winter and cold weather, but that doesn't necessarily mean the butterfly season is at an end. On warmer days it may still be possible to find some butterflies. You just have to look a little harder. One species you might see is the Common Buckeye shown above.

As we get into the frigid weather of November through January, you may be surprised to see a butterfly during a warm spell. Several common species have adults that overwinter. I found a Common Buckeye, American Snout and Orange Sulphur on a Dec. 31 Christmas bird count several years back.

Our first butterflies of 2015 were spotted on a sunny day in mid-January. Believe me, one mid-winter butterfly is worth a hundred summer butterflies when it comes to raising your spirits! Keep your eyes open and let me know what you see.

Bill Haley



Tentative 2016 butterfly count dates

My job at the Tennessee Aquarium requires that I schedule programming way ahead, (*I already have some programs booked in June 2016!*). That means that I also need to schedule other things, like butterfly counts, way ahead too. Plan to help with one, or all, of the scheduled butterfly counts next year.

- Thurs., March 31: TN River Gorge (spring count)
- Thurs., April 28: Soddy-Daisy, TN (spring count)
- Sat., June 4: TN River Gorge, (summer count)
- Thurs., June 16: Soddy-Daisy, TN (summer count)
- Sat., July 9: Lookout Mountain, GA (summer count)
- Thurs., July 21: Stevenson, AL (summer count)
- Sat., Aug. 13: TN River Gorge, TN (fall count)
- Thur., Sept. 1: Soddy-Daisy, TN (fall count)



Eastern Tailed-Blue, male
Everes comyntas

Photo by
Mike O'Brien



Great Spangled Fritillary
Speyeria cybele

Photo by Nora Bernhardt

Around the Puddle

by Bill Haley

Cold Snap

The past couple of mornings have been the first "long pants" days in quite awhile. The last Lookouts game I attended, it was so cold I left in the middle of the 10th with the Lookouts down two runs. I'd had enough. That turned out to be a good choice since Chatanooga tied the game in the 10th, but finally lost in 11 innings anyway. If I'd stayed to the end, I would have been colder for an extra 30-45 minutes.

Is it bye-bye shorts for good? Nope. Cool weather in early September is a little hint of things to come, but it doesn't last. The shorts will stay out for awhile longer and will be needed again before the end of the week because it is going to get warmer.

The butterflies know this. For them it has been business as usual. It might take a bit longer warming up after a chilly night, but as long as the sun shines and the temperature climbs high enough, they'll keep going.

Each day of the cold snap, the sun has cooperated and it has warmed during mid-day. The "nectar cafes" in my front yard (bur marigold, zinnia and butterfly bush) have been crowded with thirsty customers.

Of course, anytime a small butterfly is too eager to belly up to the nectar bar and rushes in for a quick sip, they may forget caution. Then the predators take full advantage of the situation, as evidenced by the patient hunter below, a crab spider in my butterfly bush, who has just snagged an unwary Fiery Skipper.



Hey, crab spiders get hungry in early September too!



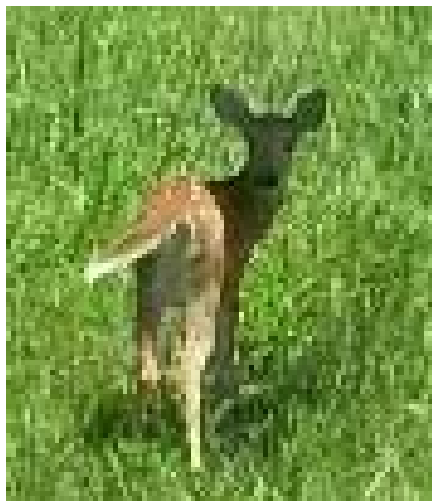
Sleepy Orange mated pair
Eurema nicippe

Photo by Bill Haley



Common Buckeye caterpillar feeding on host plant, narrow-leaved plantain.

Photo by Bill Haley

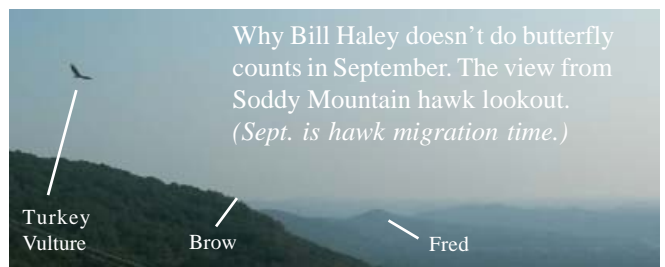


That's not a butterfly!

But it was seen on a butterfly count. Bill Haley and Libby Wolfe surprised two spotted fawns in a grassy field on Moccasin Bend during the Tennessee River Gorge fall seasonal butterfly count. You just never know what you might find!

- Photo by Bill Haley

Miscellaneous other neat things photographed during 2015



EXCITING NEW BUTTERFLY DISCOVERY!

Libby Wolfe and Tommie Rogers Discover
Bronze Copper colony in Meigs County, TN.

On Saturday, September 25, Tommie Rogers and Libby Wolfe discovered a colony of Bronze Copper, *Lycaena hyllus*, near Sugar Creek in Meigs County. They were bird-watching, looking for a Sedge Wren, when they both noticed some coppers nectaring on smartweed blooms nearby. What a surprise to discover that they were Bronze Coppers, which have only been found in West Tennessee in the past few years! The closest existing Tennessee record is in Rutherford County in Middle Tennessee. This noteworthy find is an exciting first record for East Tennessee!

They took several folks back the following day and by walking around the wetland, 25 individual Bronze Coppers were discovered. This was a higher total than has ever been reported anywhere in Tennessee!



The two photos above, taken by Libby Wolfe, are a male Bronze Copper. Interestingly, Libby says the males seemed to like the pink smartweed best, while females preferred white!



The two photos above, taken by Tommie Rogers, are of a female Bronze Copper.

In the book "Butterflies of the East Coast" by Rick Cech and Guy Tudor, they state: "Bronze Coppers have declined sharply in much of their northeastern range in recent decades. Yet, despite their large size and dramatic appearance, they have attracted little attention among conservationists. Strongholds remain in our area, but this is a troubled species that needs stewardship in our increasingly urbanized region. During the decade we spent preparing this book, we encountered Bronze Coppers just twice, and we found them absent in many formerly reliable sites, especially near large urban centers."

Male Bronze Coppers perch on low foliage with wings widespread to await females." They go on to say that Bronze Coppers are, "Widespread but very local, uncommon to rare, usually seen in small numbers." Their habitat is "low, wet areas, such as damp meadows, poorly drained bottomlands, sedge meadows, ditches, brackish salt marsh edges, pond edges, etc."

Hostplants listed include "mainly docks, including the native Water Dock (*Rumex orbiculatus*) and sometimes the non-native Curly Dock (*R. crispus*); knotweeds (*Polygonium*) has been reported. Eggs are laid singly on hostplant leaves, larvae emerge in spring to feed."