



ClouDED Sulphur
Colias philodice

Photo by
Susan Schott

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

March 2016

Volume 10, Number 1

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

First Butterflies of 2016!

Welcome to 2016! As I write this, it is a cold, drizzly Monday in February. Spring seems very far away on this drab winter day. However, according to the Weather Channel our temperatures are predicted to reach the mid-60's by Friday. Some of us may be lucky enough to see a butterfly in only four days!

Actually some of our members have already seen their first butterfly of the year. The first butterfly of 2016, a ClouDED Sulphur, was spotted on a sunny day on January 6 by Susan Schott and Libby Wolfe at the Standifer Gap Marsh. Susan took its photo as it nestled in the short brown grasses along the pathway. That is the bit of yellow you see above.

On February 1, Libby called to say she was eating lunch at her home in Ooltewah when a ClouDED Sulphur flew past the window. She became the first person to see two species this year!

I guess most of us will have to wait to see that first butterfly of 2016, but rest assured - a winter or early spring butterfly is as welcome a sight as the first yellow daffodil bloom of the year.

Bill Haley

In December I got an e-mail from Susan Schott, following her recent trip to Santa Barbara, California with Christine Bock, Ann Brown and others. She explained they had found a tagged monarch and Susan was able to get a decent photo. Her interesting story begins with an e-mail she sent to get additional information - and what she found out.

Editor



Adventures With a Tagged Monarch by Susan Schott

On December 3, 2015 at Ellwood Butterfly Reserve in Goleta, I was visiting with a group of 7 from the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga, Tennessee. We had come specifically to see the wintering monarchs in coastal California. While we were there, a woman, Jessica kam from Oxnard, was there with her family and noticed that one of the monarchs had a tag. She worked hard to get us to see it. It was difficult for us to find because it was on the bottom of a cluster that was in the shade and in the back of the ravine full of clusters.

I was able to get one photo of the tag that is almost legible. The photo was taken from a distance and without much light. I think the tag number reads AK825 or possibly AK625 or AK525). I cannot read the contact information but David Marriott sent me an example of a similar tag that looks as if it might be from your group. Hopefully you can help with this. We are all interested in finding out where and when the monarch was tagged.

(cont., page 2)

.....
2016 butterfly count dates

Mark your calendar and plan to help with one, or all, of the scheduled butterfly counts in 2016. In the event of inclement weather on one of our first two counts of the spring, the May 19 date will be a make-up day. If those first two counts happen, we'll do the Lookout Mountain, GA count circle that day.

- Tues., April 5: TN River Gorge (spring count)
- Thurs., April 28: Soddy-Daisy, TN (spring count)
- Thurs., May 19: Lookout Mtn., GA (spring count)
- Sat., June 4: TN River Gorge, (summer count)
- Mon., June 20: Soddy-Daisy, TN (summer count)
- Sat., July 9: Stevenson, AL (summer count)
- Thurs., July 21: Lookout Mtn., GA (summer count)
- Sat., Aug. 13: TN River Gorge, TN (fall count)
- Thur., Sept. 1: Soddy-Daisy, TN (fall count)

Plant Natives 2016

An Annual Symposium Presented by the
Tennessee Valley Chapter of Wild Ones

Celebrating the Southeast's Bounty
Saturday, March 5, 2016
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
University Center Auditorium
642 E. 5th St., Chattanooga, TN

\$50 in advance - Wild Ones members
\$60 in advance, non-members
\$70 at door for everyone
Early Registration open till March 2

<http://tennesseevalley.wildones.org/2016-symposium/>

- 8:00-9:00 Registration
- 9:00 Welcome Remarks
- 9:15-10:15: "Best Southeastern Natives for the Home Landscape", with Dr. Larry Mellichamp
- 10:15-10:30: Break
- 10:30-11:30: "Bizarre Natives", Dr. Larry Mellichamp
- 11:30-1:00: Lunch and Exhibits
- 1:00-1:15: Door Prizes and Announcements
- 1:15-2:15: "Identification of Tennessee Oaks and Hickories", with Ron Lance
- 2:15-2:30: Break
- 2:30-3:30: "Native Fruits of the Southeast" with Tony Glover
- 3:30-4:30: Exhibits and Book Signings

The Tennessee Valley chapter of the North American Butterfly Association will have an informational table set up at this event. This will be a good chance to get the word out about our club to butterfly and wild-flower lovers in the area. Plan to come if you can!



Close-up of Common Milkweed bloom.
Larval hostplant for Monarch butterflies.

Tagged Monarch, (cont. from pg. 1)

On Dec. 14, Gail Morris, Southwest Monarch Study Coordinator, responded:

Hi Susan,

Sorry for the long delay - it took a bit to connect to the tagger. Here is the information:

AK825 was tagged at the Nature Conservancy's River Fork Ranch in Genoa, NV on Sept. 26 by Susan Potts. She only tagged ONE monarch this season and you were the lucky one to spot it! This nearly straight south flight was approximately 309 miles due south.

I posted photos on our Southwest Monarch Study FB page and will also let David Marriott know. Here is the link to the photos: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthwestMonarchStudy/posts/1248285745187911>.

Thank you so much for reporting the tag! We couldn't have done it without your keen eyes! Please let me know if you have any other questions I can help you with. Your name will be recorded with our records. With gratitude.

The rest of the story is from Susan Potts, our tagger, which she posted on the Facebook page:

"It was amazing to watch this go from a caterpillar (5th instar when I captured it) through to a chrysalis and then an adult butterfly - all in my living room! I released it back at River Fork Ranch near Genoa and it flew 309 miles - wow! thank you for the excellent training so I knew how and what to do."

A Favorite March Butterfly!



Falcate Orangetip
(male)

Photo by
Mike O'Brien

Pictured above is one of the signature species of early spring. The **Falcate Orangetip**, *Anthocharis midea*, shows up each March, and is single-brooded. You'd better see it by early April or you will have missed it for another year! Quoting from Butterflies of the East Coast, "the male Falcate Orangetip is a study in perpetual motion. It emerges as much as a week before the female, and patols seemingly without pause during early spring, until a mating opportunity arises." When will they show up in 2016?

Fighting Against Extinction: The January 2016 issue of *Connect*, a publication of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, has an interesting article about efforts to save threatened species. The Tennessee Aquarium's reintroduction efforts to restore the Lake Sturgeon population in the Tennessee River was one of the programs highlighted. However, that wasn't the reason I began reading the article. It was because of the cover photo of a small Karner blue butterfly. I know many NABA members have been active in the past monitoring this declining species. While we don't currently have any endangered species of butterflies in our area, I wanted to bring this effort to your attention, so I have taken some excerpts from *Connect*.

- Editor

"in Toledo, Ohio, Mitchell Magdich has been working for more than 20 years to help reintroduce the Karner blue butterfly back into the wild in Northwest Ohio. The animals once common in the upper United States started disappearing in certain states in the late 1980's, and by the early 1990's, Magdich, curator of education at the Toledo Zoo, began a program through which a number of Karner blues would be taken from a preserve in Michigan and brought back to the Zoo to be bred and reintroduced.

"We selected the Allegan State Game Area in Michigan as our source because the Karner blues were there", he said, adding that Ohio's Kitty Todd Nature Preserve was chosen as the place to reintroduce the species.

In 1998, Magdich and his team brought 26 female Karner blues from Michigan down to a greenhouse in Toledo. Within the first year, more than 500 butterflies that were released flourished in their reintroduction site. Today, the species is living and breeding in two locations in Northwest Ohio. The problem? In 2012, the federal government pulled the plug on collecting the butterfly in Michigan because the population had started to crash.

"We went from tens of thousands of Karner blues to hundreds, even tens, so they didn't want us collecting any more," he said, adding that the decline can be attributed to the effects of climate change. "The good news is that they continue to persist in Ohio without any releases since 2012. I would call it successful today, but it would take just one (natural) event to wipe out everything."

Later on in the article, Magdich continues, "most AZA reintroduction programs face three common trials.

First, funding. Reintroduction projects are incredibly costly in time and resources. During down years, a project may lose its funding. "It is important that you try to have a variety of funding sources and not rely on a single one", Magdich says.

Second, personnel. These programs require a high level of expertise." Let's say one person doesn't

bother to check the temperature in a greenhouse. It gets too high and you find out that you wiped out all of your animals for the year. That can happen," he noted.

Third, changing political climates. New administrations - state or federal - can bring with them changing priorities regarding natural resources. "Topics surrounding endangered species are highly political," he said. "With reintroduction programs, you are always living on a knife's edge."



Mike O'Brien's first butterfly of 2016 was this beautiful Question Mark, *Polygonia interrogationis*, seen in his yard in Valley Head, Alabama on February 19. Mike points out that this is the winter form, which overwinters as an adult. Although a bit frayed around the edges of the wings, it was active on a very sunny, but windy day. Arrows point to the dash above a spot on the forewing that identifies it as a Question Mark. The very similar Eastern Comma does not have this marking.



Compare this photo with the Question Mark in the top photo. Note that there are no dashes, which makes this an Eastern Comma. This was Bill Haley's first butterfly of the year, seen on Feb. 27 in the Blue Blazes area at Moccasin Bend.

Planning a Butterfly Garden This Year?

You might want to consider some of these plants, either because they provide plentiful nectar or caterpillar food. (Some do a good job with both!)



Butterfly Weed is a great choice for a butterfly garden. Perennial, non-invasive, and sporting showy bright orange, nectar-filled flowers. It is in the milkweed family, making it one of the hostplants for the Monarch butterfly. Bill Haley snapped the photo at right of a Monarch caterpillar munching on Butterfly Weed.



ZINNIA is an annual flower that deserves a spot in every butterfly garden!

Zinnias are very easy to grow, come in a wide variety of colors, bloom almost all summer long and boy - do they ever attract butterflies! Try to avoid double blooms and go with more old-fashioned single blooming varieties.



Purple Coneflower

is a perennial native wildflower that will form a clump that comes back year after year. The flowers shown at right are a subspecies found on limestone barrens in Middle Tennessee. The coneflower's blooms are a favorite of butterflies. They are also a host plant for the Silvery Checkerspot.



Speaking of **Black Swallowtails**, you might consider planting some dill, parsley, fennel or even encouraging some Queen Anne's Lace in a nearby field. They are all larval hostplants for this species.



PHLOX is another group of garden flowers which will readily attract butterflies. This male Sachem is perched on *Phlox paniculata*, the tall garden phlox.