



West Virginia White
Pieris virginiensis

Photo by
David Spicer

©2016 David Spicer

One of the advantages of doing spring seasonal counts is to hopefully find single-brooded butterflies seen only in early spring. This West Virginia White was photographed by David Spicer during the Tennessee River Gorge count on April 5. In 2015 our count led the nation in this species with 2!

Upcoming Butterfly Counts

Note: There is a \$3 fee per participant on all NABA counts. This money goes to the North American Butterfly Association to help defray their publication costs.

Thurs., May 19: 17th Annual Lookout Mountain, GA spring count

Meet: 9:30am 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. If you are free, please come help us count butterflies! Dress prepared to wade through tall grasses and possibly some briars, wear comfortable sturdy shoes, not sandals or crocs, a hat is always a good idea - and bring snacks and plenty to drink. It may be hot by then, so make sure you stay hydrated.



Gorgone Checkerspot
Chlosyne gorgone

Photo by
Tommie Rogers

The most noteworthy find of the spring seasonal counts so far is a Gorgone Checkerspot, found on Flat Top Mountain by Tommie Rogers during the Soddy-Daisy count. For several years we haven't found this butterfly on Bakewell Mountain, and it is great news that it still persists in the area!

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

May 2016

Volume 10, Number 3

Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

Totals for the Spring Seasonal Tennessee River Gorge count

The Tennessee River Gorge, TN spring seasonal count was conducted on Tuesday, April 5. Participants were Harold Birch, Mike O'Brien, David Spicer, Scott Spicer, Tommie Rogers, John Diener, Libby Wolfe and Bill Haley. They split up into 3 parties, for a very respectable combined party hour total of 20 hours. We got started around 10am, with sunny skies, but very cool temperatures. The butterflies just weren't active yet and we really didn't start seeing them until around noon. Some single-brooded "spring ephemeral" butterflies seen included West Virginia White, Falcate Orangetip and Pepper and Salt Skipper. Considering our poor start we finished with a surprisingly nice total of 25 species and 500 individual butterflies.

Following is a list of species and numbers:

Pipevine Swallowtail 3, Zebra Swallowtail 3, E. Tiger Sw. 103, Spicebush Sw. 10, dark swallowtail sp. 10, West Virginia White 3, white sp. 1, Falcate Orangetip 3, sulphur sp. 1 (this counts as a species, since we saw no other sulphurs), Red-banded Hairstreak 1, Eastern Tailed-Blue 47, Spring Azure 14, American Snout 1, Pearl Crescent 28, Question Mark 4, E. Comma 1, Polygonia sp. 1, American Lady 2, Red Admiral 6, Gemmed Satyr 1, Carolina Satyr 4, Silver-spotted Skipper 5, Dreamy Duskywing 1, Sleepy Duskywing 2, Juvenal's Duskywing 177, Wild Indigo Duskywing 1, duskywing sp. 51, Common Checkered Skipper 4, Pepper and Salt Skipper 2. **Total: 25 species, 500 individuals.**

Sat., June 4: TN River Gorge, TN

(Summer Count) Just in case the June issue doesn't get out in time, we'll meet at Signal Mtn. Food City parking lot at 9:30am. Call Bill with any questions.

OTHER 2016 BUTTERFLY COUNT DATES:

- 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)

Around the Puddle

Duskywings on Parade

by Bill Haley

On April 5, I fully expected to see blizzards of dark little duskywings to start the day. Despite the fact it was cool, I reasoned that their dark color would help them warm faster in the abundant sunshine and they would be active well before other butterflies. We got to our first stop in the Tennessee River Gorge on River Canyon Road and no duskywings. We made our second stop - no duskywings there either. In fact, there were no butterflies of any type to be found.

Around this time, my phone rang and it was Dave Spicer. He and Scott specialize in covering areas in the Sequatchie Valley and on Prentice Cooper. Bad news - Prentice Cooper was closed off because of a turkey hunt - so that left out a key spot we normally count on. Worse news, Dave and Scott were having no better luck than we were, which meant they were seeing nothing.

Harold consulted his weather app and learned it was 49 degrees. Once again we were victims of fickle early spring weather. The day before it had been a balmy 76 degrees and it would have been a wonderful butterfly day, but now a cold snap had descended on us. The cool wind out of the northeast didn't help matters. The only thing we had working for us was a clear, sunny day.

I joked that as soon as the thermometer registered 51 degrees, the butterflies would come out of their torpor and start flying. Guess what? That is just about what happened. We finally saw our first butterflies in the meadows below the Pot House. It was a welcome sign that things would probably get better in the afternoon.

By now I'm sure you are on the edge of your seat wondering if those clouds of duskywings ever appeared. Yes they did! In one spot we counted over 50 on a small one foot square patch of mud, and many more flew all about us.

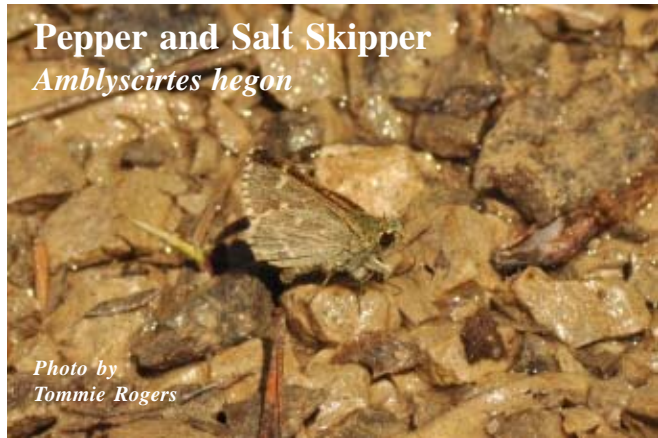
I was really curious about what percentage of those duskywings were Juvenal's, so I brought my net and a viewing jar that morning. A good sampling of duskywings were netted. They were put in a jar to look for presence or absence of the two distinctive light spots of the Juvenal's, and then the slightly inconvenienced butterflies were released. All of the ones netted were Juvenal's Duskywing. We somehow managed to find three other duskywing species that day as well.



Bottom two photos are **Juvenal's Duskywing**
Erynnis juvenalis



Thanks to Tommie Rogers for the two bottom photos.



Pepper and Salt Skipper
Amblyscirtes hegon

Photo by
Tommy Rogers

Boasting a scientific name much larger than it is, the tiny **Pepper and Salt Skipper** is found only in early spring. Last year on the Tennessee River Gorge spring count we found 7, which was the highest number reported in the nation.



Carolina Satyr
Hermeuptychia sosybius

Photo by
Libby Wolfe



Gemmed Satyr
Cylopsis gemma

Photo by
David Spicer

Most people think of butterflies as being very colorful. Many people never notice small butterflies, and think that all are the size of swallowtails. People who know butterflies learn to appreciate even the “little brown jobs”, like the three above, especially if it is the first one you’ve seen that year!



Small in Size, Large in Beauty!

**Eastern
Tailed-Blue
(male)**

photo by
David Spicer



**Eastern
Tailed-Blue
(female)**

The **Eastern Tailed-Blue**, *Everes comyntas*, is one of our most common and widespread butterflies and also one of the smallest species in the Eastern United States. Above, males are a deep iridescent blue, shading a bit towards purple, while females are dark brownish-gray. A good field mark to separate them from the azures are the orange marks on their outer hindwing near the base of the thread-like tails, visible on both the dorsal and ventral surfaces. They are often seen basking with their wings open, as both the above photos show. The wings are usually held partially open at around a 45 degree angle. They are considered a generalist species, widely adapted to a range of hostplants, which include vetches, clovers, bush clovers and many others. Their caterpillars feed most often on flowers and seeds, sometimes leaves.

Totals for the Spring Seasonal Soddy-Daisy, TN count

The spring count in the Soddy-Daisy circle was originally scheduled for April 28. Unfortunately the weather man predicted rain and thunderstorms that day (which didn't happen, it was partly cloudy, but windy). Bill Haley decided to try for a count the next day when conditions were forecast to be much better for butterflies. On Friday, April 29, Libby Wolfe, Nancy Williams, Susan Schott, Tommie Rogers, David Spicer, Scott Spicer and Bill Haley conducted the count. They split into three parties, putting in 16 total party hours. Conditions were mostly sunny skies, light winds and temperatures between 70 and 86F.

The list of species and numbers:

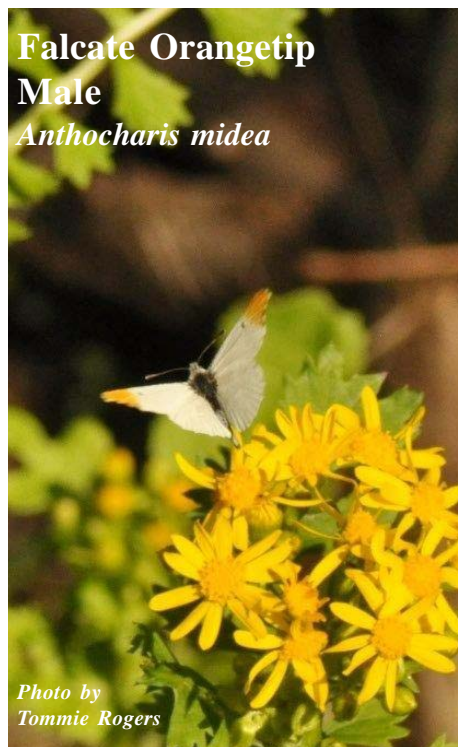
Black Swallowtail 2, E. Tiger Sw. 98, Spicebush Sw. 26, Giant Sw. 1, Clouded Sulphur 1, Orange Su. 2, Cloudless Su. 3, Juniper Hairstreak 1, Red-banded Ha. 1, E. Pine Elfin 2, E. Tailed-Blue 13, Spring Azure 7, American Snout 11, Variegated Fr. 4, Gorgone Checkerspot 1, Silvery Checkerspot 1, Pearl Crescent 60, E. Comma 3, American Lady 3, Red Admiral 9, Com. Buckeye 1, Red-sp. Purple 9, Hackberry Emperor 3, Carolina Satyr 40, Little Wood Satyr 1, Silver-sp. Skipper 4, N. Cloudywing 2, Sleepy Duskywing 1, Juvenal's Duskywing 14, Wild Indigo Du. 8, Clouded Skipper 1, Least Sk. 3, Peck's Sk. 1, Sachem 13, Hobomok Sk. 2, Zabulon Sk. 1, Pepper and Salt Sk. 1, Bell's Roadside Sk. 2, unid. dk. sw. sp. 7, unid. duskywing sp. 19. Silvery Checkerspot caterpillar - 1.

Total: 38 species, 384 individuals.



Common Checkered Skipper,
Female
Pyrgus communis

Photo by
Libby Wolfe



Falcate Orangetip
Male
Anthocharis midea

Photo by
Tommie Rogers

Photos on this page:

Top: Four **Common Checkered Skippers** were found on Moccasin Bend during the Tennessee River Gorge count.

Middle: Tommie Rogers snapped this shot of a male **Falcate Orangetip** as it took wing from a Golden Alexander flower. The count on April 5 was very near the end of the flight period for the single-brooded Falcate Orangetip, so we were pleased to find three that day.

Bottom: Our first butterflies of the day were found in the meadows along the river below the Pot Point Field Station. Pictured from left are Harold Birch, Libby Wolfe, John Diener, Lizzie Diener (who met us there after doing bird surveys all morning) and Mike O'Brien. John is currently working on a project to rehabilitate the meadow area and make it more attractive for butterflies.



Silvery Checkerspot
Chlosyne nycteis

Photo by
Bill Haley



Tennessee River Gorge spring seasonal count

Photo by
Bill Haley