



Photo by
Bill Haley

On The Wing

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North American Butterfly Association

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June 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.

Sat., June 4: 22nd Annual Tennessee River Gorge, TN count

Meet: 9:30am at the Signal Mountain Food City parking lot on Signal Mountain Road

Leader: Bill Haley (423) 326-9248, wgh@tnaqua.org

Take part in the second oldest butterfly count in Tennessee! If you are unsure of your butterfly identification skills, this is your chance to spend some time with experienced butterfly counters and get to know the different species in the area. Extra eyeballs are always welcome to help spot the butterflies! We sometimes split up into different teams to cover more areas within the 15 mile diameter count circle, but don't worry - you'll always be with someone who can make the tougher ID calls. Dress prepared to wade through tall grasses and possibly some briars, wear comfortable sturdy shoes, not sandals or crocs. Sunscreen and a hat is always a good idea - and bring snacks and plenty to drink. It will probably be hot by then, so prepare to stay well-hydrated. You may spend the day with us, or break away early if you choose.

Mon., June 20: 20th Annual Soddy-Daisy, TN count

Meet: Daisy United Methodist Church, 9508 Dayton Pike, Soddy-Daisy, TN 38379. **Leader:** Bill Haley (see contact information above for info or directions.)

Note that this count, third oldest in Tennessee, will be conducted on a **MONDAY!** Centered at Soddy Lake Roadside Park, this count covers both sides of the Tennessee River. In case you are unfamiliar with how NABA butterfly counts are conducted, each count circle is 15 miles in diameter. We cover as many habitats as we can in a day, counting not only species, but individual butterflies. A surprising total of 38 species was found by the three different parties on the spring seasonal count and it'll be a challenge to equal or beat that total. The more counters we have the more likely we can do it! (See above for items to bring.)

Totals for the Spring Seasonal Lookout Mountain, GA count

The Lookout Mountain, GA spring seasonal count was conducted on Thursday, May 19. Completely overcast skies didn't look promising when the counters met that morning, but luckily the skies cleared around 11:00 and butterfly numbers were good for the rest of the day, for a very surprising total of 43 species. Participants were Bill Haley, Nancy Williams, Tommie Rogers, Mike O'Brien, David Spicer and Scott Spicer. They split into three parties for a combined 6 miles walked and 21 total party hours. Once again this strategy paid off as more habitats get surveyed and every different party ends up seeing some different species. Best finds: Tommie Rogers' American Coppers and Goatweed Leafwing, Creole Pearly-eye and Hobomok Skipper by Dave and Scott Spicer and Dusted Skipper by Bill Haley.

Following is a list of species and numbers:

Pipevine Swallowtail 1, E. Tiger Sw. 18, Spicebush Sw. 20, Cabbage White 12, Clouded Sulphur 12, Orange Su. 17, American Copper 4, Gray Hairstreak 1, E. Tailed-Blue 12, Spring Azure 39, American Snout 8, Variegated Fritillary 1, Great Spangled Fr. 25, Silvery Checkerspot 8, Pearl Crescent 10, Question Mark 12, E. Comma 3, American Lady 14, Common Buckeye 2, Red-sp. Purple 6, Goatweed Leafwing 1, Hackberry Emperor 10, Tawny Emp. 6, N. Pearly-eye 5, Creole Pearly-eye 2, Carolina Satyr 41, Little Wood Sa. 27, Silver-sp. Skipper 12, Hoary Edge 3, N. Cloudywing 5, Common Checkered Sk. 1, Clouded Sk. 2, Least Sk. 3, Tawny-edged Sk. 2, Crossline Sk. 8, S. Broken-Dash 1, N. Broken-Dash 2, Little Glassywing 2, Sachem 23, Hobomok Sk. 1, Zabulon Sk. 17, Dun Sk. 6, Dusted Sk. 2. Unidentified: dk. swallowtail 5, white sp. 7, satyr sp. 10, angling sp. 6. **Total: species 43, individuals 435.**

REMAINING 2016 BUTTERFLY COUNT DATES:

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

The Scouting Jinx

by Bill Haley

It never fails! While it would seem that scouting an area where you are going to conduct a butterfly count would be a good idea, it often results in what I'll call, for lack of a better term, the "scouting jinx". You find them while scouting, then you can't find them on count day.

Since I set the dates for the Tennessee River Gorge, Soddy-Daisy, Lookout Mountain, GA and Stevenson, AL counts months in advance, I feel that I should set a good example as leader and compiler by showing up on the designated day at the designated time and place.

Sometimes this means I show up, even though I don't expect anyone else to. Take the spring seasonal count in Soddy-Daisy as an example. The day it was scheduled, April 28, looked very sketchy - with thunderstorms predicted and the weathermen seemed pretty sure of themselves. Not good butterfly counting weather! I already knew most of the folks who were planning to join me to count, so I contacted them early that morning and we decided to try for Friday, April 29.

Now I had a dilemma: What if someone else unexpectedly decided to show up that morning? Maybe someone who wanted to take part in their very first butterfly counting experience? I decided I'd better drive up to Soddy-Daisy just in case.

The bizarre thing was that immediately after contacting all my regular counters, I walked outside to behold a blue sky and sunshine! Darn those weathermen! But I told myself, "*Maybe they know there are bad things to come.*"

I showed up at the meeting spot on time. Nobody else showed up. It was partly cloudy with lots of blue sky, but it was very windy.

Just so the trip didn't go to waste, I decided 3 or 4 hours scouting of the area wouldn't hurt. Butterflies were out in abundance. It never completely clouded up and it never rained a drop. It would have been a perfectly good day to conduct a count - if I hadn't listened to those dire weather predictions. I found some good species too, including Zebra Swallowtail, Gemmed Satyr and Hoary Edge. I thought of the scouting jinx, but hoped it would not come into play.

We enjoyed a great day of counting the next day, finding 38 total species. I'll give you one guess what three species we *DIDN'T* find.

Summary of NABA Butterfly Counts in 2015

A total of 433 butterfly counts were published in the 2015 North American Butterfly Association count report I recently received from NABA. The breakdown is as follows: 35 were spring seasonal, 328 were 4th of July counts and 70 were fall seasonal. The total also included 19 counts from previous years that were not reported earlier. My favorite place name of any count? Skunk's Misery, Ontario. Makes you wonder, doesn't it?

The 406 counts in 2015 were held in 45 states, plus Washington D.C. Florida led in number of counts (57), followed by California (28), Tennessee (24) and Michigan (23). That's right folks, Tennessee was third in the nation in the number of counts done in 2015!

4405 observers contributed to the 433 counts across North America. (Many observers helped with more than one count, so were counted more than once.) All count observers combined contributed 7,383 party hours and 4,198 party miles on foot.

The average 2015 count has been held for 16 years. 2016 will mark the 22nd year for Tennessee River Gorge, the 20th for Soddy-Daisy, 17th for Lookout Mtn, GA and 14th for Stevenson, AL.

Sadly, no counts were submitted from Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky, Nevada, North Dakota, or West Virginia. Two of these states, Kentucky and West Virginia, are in the Appalachians region which I compile for NABA.

Anyone out there want to go to southern Kentucky to do a count this year? (I've got a count circle, centered in Williamsburg, KY, already picked out!) Let me know and I'll check my calendar.

- Bill Haley



Two For One! This photo was sent by one of my insulator collecting friends, Bob Scafe, in British Columbia. Bob has recently gotten into butterflies and moths, and knowing I was interested in them too he has started sending some of his photos to Mike O'Brien and I. He said he was so intent on getting a photo of the **Western Pine Elfin** he didn't even see the emerald moth to the right in the same shot! Nice photo Bob!

American Copper

Lycaena phlaeus



Photos by
Tommie Rogers

The two shots above are of one of four **American Coppers**, *Lycaena phlaeus*, Tommie Rogers found on the Lookout Mountain, GA butterfly count. While it is not the first time we've found this species on this count, her find was noteworthy as they have been found less than 5 times in the 17 years of the count. Their main hostplant in this area seems to be sheep sorrel, which is much more common than the butterfly. Most people would consider it an unwanted weed.



The first **Great Spangled Fritillary** counted this year were on the Lookout Mtn. count. (25 total). This photo was taken by Bill Haley alongside Hwy. 189 on Lookout Mountain.



Photo by
Bill Haley

Not skunked! When we arrived at our first stop of the day on the Lookout Mountain count, the gray, overcast skies were not looking promising. Then Bill Haley spotted a Pearl Crescent perched a few feet from where he stood. In this shot, everyone is checking out our first butterfly of the day. From left, Scott Spicer (contemplating), Nancy Williams, Tommie Rogers, Mike O'Brien and David Spicer.



Sometimes it pays to play a hunch. A wildflower meadow along Hwy. 189 on Lookout Mountain was Bill's last stop of the day. He drove past it, but upon noting the many flowers in bloom, decided to turn around and go back to check it out. The two biggest draws for butterflies were a small thistle and golden Alexander. Several American Lady, Great Spangled Fritillary and a number of skipper species were found there.

The best find in the wildflower meadow above was the **Dusted Skipper**, *Atrytonopsis hianna*. They prefer sandy barrens, dry open fields and grasslands. They are listed as uncommon to locally common in the north but more rare in the south. Males perch on or near the ground, which is exactly where Bill found this one.





Photo by Bill Haley

Monarch Host Plant Discovery. Veteran butterfly counters look for wildflower communities containing butterfly host plants or nectar-providing plants. On a roadside Bill Haley has walked every year for the past 17 years during butterfly counts, he, Nancy Williams and Mike O'Brien found this blooming plant. It was obviously a member of the milkweed family - but none of them had ever seen it before! No Monarch caterpillars or eggs that day, but the Green Antelope Milkweed was an exciting new discovery!



Photo by Bill Haley

Several **American Lady** butterflies were spotted nectaring on Golden Alexander during the Lookout Mtn. count. Remember you can tell it is an American Lady by the "big eyes" - the two large eyespots on the underside of the hindwing. Painted Lady has several smaller eyespots. No Painted Ladies have been found on the first three counts this year, which is somewhat of a mystery when you consider all the hundreds of Painted Ladies raised and released by elementary school children in this area - and many other areas of the country as well. What becomes of all those raised-in-captivity Painted Ladies?



Photo by Bill Haley

Fritillary Host Plant. Speaking of host plants - the Bird's-foot Violet is a host of both the Great Spangled and Diana Fritillary. Bill Haley took this photo on Bakewell Mountain during the Soddy-Daisy count. Females scatter eggs near the plants and then the tiny caterpillars overwinter after hatching. The next spring they become active and must crawl about to locate a host plant. A seemingly precarious breeding strategy!



Photo by David Spicer

Dave and Scott Spicer found this **Northern Pearly-eye** on the Lookout Mountain count. Note the antennal club - orange at the tip, but black at the base of the club. *Butterflies of the East Coast* states: "the Northern Pearly-eye is at home in the deep shade of forest understories. It seldom frequents adjoining fields, as it rarely if ever feeds on nectar. Rather, adults forage on sap....also dung, carrion, fungi and mud."