



# On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,  
North American Butterfly Association

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## July 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.

### How should you prepare for a butterfly count?

Dress prepared to wade through tall grasses and possibly some briars. Long pants, NOT shorts, are a good idea. Veteran counters often tuck pants legs into socks to deter ticks, chiggers and poison ivy. Be sure to wear comfortable sturdy shoes, not sandals or crocs. Sunscreen and a hat will be needed - and be sure to bring snacks and plenty to drink - prepare to stay well-hydrated. Binoculars, preferably close-focusing, will help you note subtle field marks you might otherwise miss on butterflies you can't approach closely. You may spend the day, or break away early if you choose.

### Sat., July 9: 14th Annual Stevenson, Alabama count

**Meet: 9:00am at the supermarket on Brown's Ferry Road to caravan to Stevenson, or meet at the City Park in Stevenson, AL on Hwy. 117 at 10:00 Eastern time. Leader: Bill Haley. Questions? Please contact Bill at the following: (423) 326-9248, wgh@tnaqua.org**  
We will roam a little further afield for the 14th annual Stevenson, AL count.

### Thurs., July 21: 17th Annual Lookout Mountain, GA count

**Meet: 9:30 at the International Towing Museum on Broad Street to caravan to the count circle in Chattanooga Valley. Leader: Bill Haley (see contact information above for info or directions.)**

We had excellent luck on the spring seasonal count in this circle, finding 43 species. Can we equal or beat that on our summer count? Join us and we'll give it a good try. We will cover as many habitats as we can in a day, counting not only species, but also individual butterflies. We need all the eyeballs we can get! The more counters we have the more likely we will find every butterfly possible. Please note How to Prepare above and come prepared for a day in the field working on your butterfly spotting and identification skills.

## Totals for the summer

### Tennessee River Gorge, TN count

The Tennessee River Gorge 4th of July count was conducted on Saturday, June 4. Conditions were challenging. Mostly overcast skies in the morning with occasional sunshine gave way to scattered rain showers and only brief periods of sun beginning around 1:00pm. Bill called it a day when he got soaked during a heavy down-pour at 3:30. The poor butterfly weather definitely kept the final species total and number of individuals low. Compiler Bill Haley wishes to thank the people who showed up to count that day. Participants were Bill Haley, Tommie Rogers, Anita Greenwell, Susan Schott and Libby Wolfe. They split into two parties for a combined 5 miles walked and 12 total party hours. Best finds were 3 Golden-banded Skippers, two by Bill Haley's party at Prentice Cooper S.F. (a first for this location), one by Tommie Rogers on Raccoon Mtn., and a Eufala Skipper by Tommie Rogers.

#### Species and numbers:

Pipevine Swallowtail 3, E. Tiger Sw. 34, Spicebush Sw. 10, Cloudless Sulphur 1, Banded Hairstreak 5, E. Tailed-Blue 27, Summer Azure 19, American Snout 5, Great Spangled Fr. 14, Pearl Crescent 7, Question Mark 2, E. Comma 1, American Lady 6, Red Admiral 2, Red-sp. Purple 2, Hackberry Emperor 24, Tawny Emp. 7, N. Pearly-eye 5, Creole Pearly-eye 2, Little Wood Sa. 2, Silver-sp. Skipper 1, Golden-banded Skipper 3, Hoary Edge 3, N. Cloudywing 8, Fiery Skipper 11, Tawny-edged Sk. 1, Sagem 1, Dun Sk.2, Eufala Sk. 1.

**Unidentified:** dk. swallowtail 5.

**Immatures:** Spicebush Sw., 5 caterpillars on spicebush, Pipevine Sw., 5 caterpillars on Dutchman's pipevine, Silver-spotted Skipper, 7 caterpillars on kudzu, Golden-banded Sk., 9 caterpillars on hog peanut / thicket vine.

**Total: species 29, individuals 212.**

See page 2 for a brand new count in **Kentucky!**

#### **REMAINING 2016 BUTTERFLY COUNT DATES:**

**Wed., July 27: Williamsburg, KY** (4th of July)

**Sat., Aug. 13: TN River Gorge, TN** (fall count)

**Thur., Sept. 1: Soddy-Daisy, TN** (fall count)

# Around the Puddle

## Kentucky-bound!

by Bill Haley

In last month's newsletter, you may have noticed the following statement: "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."

A little history is in order to explain why I wish to do something so unusual as traveling all the way to Kentucky to do a butterfly count.

I've served as NABA's Appalachians editor for a good number of years. I compile all counts reported from the three states of Tennessee, West Virginia and Kentucky for publication in the annual NABA Count Report. In that time I've never received a single count report from Kentucky. I write up a short summary of noteworthy species seen within the Appalachians region. Many times I've included a plea for someone to institute a count in Kentucky. My pleas have fallen on deaf ears - not a single offer from anyone to help this situation.

Are there no butterfly lovers in the entire state of Kentucky? Aren't there some butterfly people here in Tennessee who live near enough to Kentucky to step over the border and do a count?

Sometimes if you want something done, you have to do it yourself. That is exactly what I'm planning. On Wednesday, July 27 - the very first Williamsburg, KY butterfly count will happen! The center of the count will be only 11 miles above the Tennessee border, about a mile to the east of exit 11 on I-75 North, at the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 25W and KY 92. The Cumberland River flows through Williamsburg and the western half of the circle is in the Daniel Boone National Forest.

I'm excited to institute my fifth brand new count and to explore a currently unknown area! Have I ever looked for butterflies there? Nope. Do I know the area well? No. John Henderson and I did some insulator hunts on the railroad up there several years ago - in the wintertime. Have I gone completely crazy, as some have suggested? I don't think so. Do I think we can find butterflies in Kentucky? Absolutely! I know we can.

Tommie Rogers is on board and Jeff Basham is also in. My wife Candy and I will be there. You need four people to make it "official". How about YOU? Let me know if you wish to help count butterflies in Kentucky. (423) 326-9248.

## White Milkweed



Photo by Bill Haley

Since I introduced Green Antelope Milkweed last month, I decided to showcase another lesser-known member of the milkweed family. White Milkweed is a showy species usually found on the mountains in this area in somewhat shaded, sandy areas. The ball-shaped clusters of small flowers are white with purple throats and are quite showy. Not only is this species a great nectar plant, but it also serves as a hostplant for the Monarch. Bill Haley took the two photos above during the Tennessee River Gorge count on June 4. The blooms that day were being enjoyed by flower beetles and many Great Spangled Fritillary, like the one shown above.



## Orange Butterfly Weed is NOT always orange!

This clump of butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, was seen on Bakewell Mountain during the Soddy-Daisy count. Blooms on this species range from yellow to orange to red. See the photos on page 3 for "normal" color.



**Totals for the Soddy-Daisy, TN Count, June 20, 2016**

While the Tennessee River Gorge count on June 4 suffered from cloudy skies and too much rain, the 20th annual Soddy-Daisy Fourth of July count on June 20 experienced the exact opposite conditions. Hot and bone dry conditions in the 2-3 weeks prior to the count combined to keep butterfly numbers and diversity lower than normal, with 31 species and 220 individuals counted. Participants included Mike O'Brien, Harold Birch, Sally Wencel, Nancy Williams, Anita Greenwell, Bob Hulse, Tommie Rogers, Christine Bock and Bill Haley. They split into two counting parties, and combined put in 18 hours of effort and 4 miles walked. Of note, Bill Haley's group found 7 Diana Fritillary (6 males, 1 female), 1 Aphrodite Fritillary, 38 Great Spangled Fritillaries and 3 Coral Hairstreaks on orange butterflyweed blooming along the roadsides on Bakewell Mountain. In the large field beside Highway 27 in Bakewell, they saw Sleepy Orange, Clouded, Orange and Cloudless Sulphurs in one 30 foot stretch of pink clover. Despite the highlights, it was a tough day of counting and Bill wishes to thank everyone who helped with the count.

**Species and numbers:**

Pipevine Swallowtail 2, Black Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 10, Spicebush Sw. 7, Cabbage White 4, Clouded Sulphur 2, Orange Su. 19, Cloudless Su. 1, Sleepy Orange 1, Coral Hairstreak 3, Gray Hairstreak 1, E. Tailed Blue 12, Summer Azure 13, Am. Snout 3, Variegated Fritillary 4, Diana Fr. 7, Great Spangled Fr. 39, Aphrodite Fr. 1, Pearl Crescent 7, Am. Lady 1, Red Admiral 1, Common Buckeye 3, Red-sp. Purple 3, Hackberry Emperor 3, Carolina Satyr 4, Silver-sp. Skipper 2, N. Cloudywing 1, Horace's Duskywing 3, Wild Indigo Duskywing 22, Least Skipper 2, Sachus 33. Unidentified: 3 dark sw. sp., 1 skipper sp.

**Total: species 31, individuals 220.**



**American Lady**  
*Vanessa virginiensis*



**Carolina Satyr**  
*Hermeuptychia sosybius*

Mike O'Brien took these lovely photos of an American Lady and a Carolina Satyr nectaring on purple coneflower blooms in his yard.

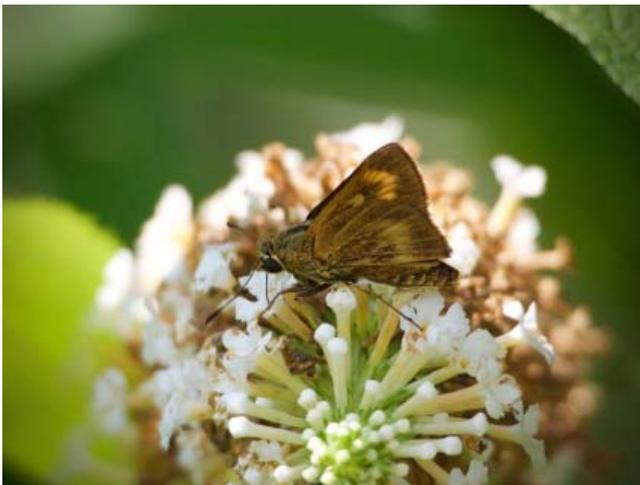


**SEEING ORANGE:** Three photos taken by Bill Haley during the Soddy-Daisy butterfly count, June 20, of butterflies nectaring on orange milkweed: (l-r) Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Coral Hairstreak, and Great Spangled Fritillary. This plant is well-named - butterflies absolutely love it!

# Mike's "Mystery Skipper"



Photos by Mike O'Brien



**Mystery skipper visits Valley Head, Alabama.** Just when you feel you are finally figuring out some of the skippers, something like this shows up. Mike O'Brien snapped these photos of a skipper visiting his yard in Valley Head, Alabama. Despite some very prominent markings, it didn't fit anything we normally see around here. After much head-scratching and study, Jeff Basham finally figured it out - it was a **Byssus Skipper**, *Problema byssus*, that was well north of its normal range. Their host plant is Eastern Gamma Grass, a tall, broad-leaved grass that grows in dense clumps. Jeff speculates that it might have been brought into the area on a decorative planting of this grass, upon which a chrysalis was attached. This just goes to show that butterflies have wings and occasionally show up in unusual places, even where they are not "supposed" to be.

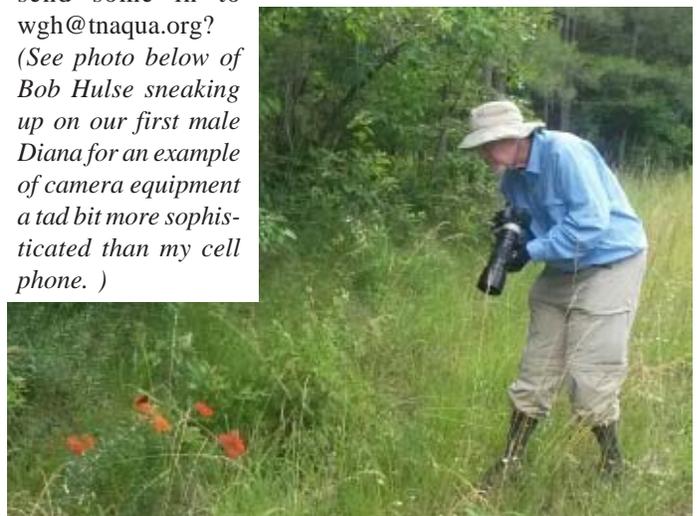
According to *Butterflies of the East Coast*, "*the Byssus Skipper inhabits thick, tall-grass wetlands, where it forms dispersed, local colonies. (Another entirely separate population lives in remnant prairie grasslands on the Great Plains.)*" The book also says "*Byssus Skippers may wander extensively during the day. Males display near colonies in early morning and late afternoon, but shift to various nectar sites at other times, often well away from display territories.*"



**Diana Fritillary**  
*Always on the MOST WANTED LIST!*

Bill Haley took these photos of the sexually dimorphic Diana Fritillary (male top, female bottom) with his cell phone during the Soddy-Daisy count on June 20. Many more males than females are seen this time of year, so it was a treat to locate the one female! Perhaps someone with a serious camera and much better photos could send some in to [wgh@tnaqua.org](mailto:wgh@tnaqua.org)?

(See photo below of Bob Hulse sneaking up on our first male Diana for an example of camera equipment a tad bit more sophisticated than my cell phone. )



**Bob Hulse, Sally Wencel and Anita Greenwell on Bakewell Mountain.**