



Photo by
Mike O'Brien

On The Wing

Newsletter of the Tennessee Valley Chapter,
North American Butterfly Association

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Editor: Bill Haley, wgh@tnaqua.org

September 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. Bug spray on the outside of your socks and lower parts of pants can be a good idea. Be sure to wear comfortable sturdy close-toed shoes, not sandals or clogs. 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.

Thurs., Sept. 1: Fall Seasonal Soddy-Daisy, TN count

Meet: 9:00 at Daisy United Methodist Church, 9508 Dayton Pike, Soddy-Daisy, TN 37379. Leader: Bill Haley (423) 326-9248, wgh@tnaqua.org

The Soddy-Daisy fall count will be the last scheduled NABA count this year. Hopefully the intense heat and drought conditions we've experienced most of the summer will be behind us and butterflies will be numerous. Plan to spend all day, or at least part of the day, enjoying the late summer butterflies. (*I noticed when I looked at July's newsletter that I stated this count would be the last one of 2017. We'll see whether that is true in about one year!*)

What caterpillar is that?

Can you identify the caterpillar pictured at the top of the page? Mike O'Brien had an "infestation" at his place in Valley Head, AL early in August, greedily eating his parsley and fennel. (Actually, this is one caterpillar most folks should welcome into their yard.) Do you know what it will become?

Totals for the fall seasonal Tennessee River Gorge, TN count

The fall Tennessee River Gorge count on Saturday, August 13 began with a light, misty rain, but it soon cleared enough for butterflies to get active. The sun shone about 25-35% of the day, winds were 5-10 MPH and temperatures ranged from 77-95 F. Counters were Harold Birch, Nancy Williams, Mike O'Brien, Tommie Rogers, Christine Bock, Carl Swafford, Beverly Swafford, David Spicer, Scott Spicer and Bill Haley. They split into four parties, and collectively put in 30 hours of count effort and walked 9 miles. Butterfly numbers and diversity have improved since the earlier summer count on Sat., June 4 due to recent rains, but in certain areas, such as the Tennessee River Gorge itself, the effects of the drought continue to keep numbers low. Clearly that area hasn't had much rain this summer.

Species and numbers:

Pipevine Swallowtail 17, Black Swallowtail 1, E. Tiger Sw. 149, Spicebush Swallowtail 36, Giant Swallowtail 1, Checkered White 1, Cabbage White 2, Clouded Sulphur 2, Orange Sulphur 4, Cloudless Sulphur 219, Little Yellow 9, Sleepy Orange 50, Gray Hairstreak 9, E. Tailed-Blue 249, Summer Azure 10, American Snout 3, Gulf Fritillary 66, Variegated Fritillary 12, Great Spangled Fritillary 7, Pearl Crescent 48, American Lady 1, Common Buckeye 139, Red-spotted Purple 6, Viceroy 2, Hackberry Emperor 20, Tawny Emperor 1, Northern Pearly-Eye 2, Carolina Satyr 35, Common Wood Nymph 1, Silver-sp. Skipper 35, Hoary Edge 7, Northern Cloudywing 4, Confused Cloudywing 1, Horace's Duskywing 6, Common Checkered Skipper 5, Clouded Skipper 21, Least Skipper 3, Fiery Skipper 29, Tawny-edged Skipper 1, Crossline Skipper 1, Southern Broken-Dash 3, Northern Broken-Dash 13, Little Glassywing 9, Sagemaster 184, Delaware Skipper 1, Zabulon Skipper 12, Dun Skipper 6, Ocola Skipper 5.

Unidentified: dk. swallowtail 5. **Immature stages:** Gulf Fritillary 7 caterpillars on passionvine, 1 chrysalis; Spicebush Swallowtail, 17 caterpillars on spicebush; Cloudless Sulphur 3 caterpillars on sicklepod; American Lady, 1 caterpillar on pearly everlasting; Sleepy Orange, 1 caterpillar on American Senna. Silver-spotted Skipper, 1 chrysalis on kudzu.

Total: species 49, individuals 1453.

Around the Puddle

Night Shift

by Bill Haley

If you've ever worked a night shift job, chances are you didn't choose those hours yourself. Having worked a swing shift for ten years when I was younger, I found some folks actually liked working second and third shift. Me? Not so much.

You may be saying "What's that got to do with butterflies? Not much, unless you consider their very close cousins, the moths. There are about 750 butterfly species in North America. Moths greatly outnumber butterflies, with around 10,000 species. Butterflies get some credit as pollinators, but what about the moths?"

Recently butterflies have been plentiful in my yard, and I see many flitting around my flower garden. This past Monday I saw Sachem, Clouded, Northern Broken-Dash, Fiery and Silver-spotted Skippers, Sleepy Orange, Cloudless Sulphur, Common Buckeye, Gulf Fritillary, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Pipevine Swallowtail in the yard nectaring on various blooms.

That evening as finishing mowing the lawn at dusk, I noticed small skipper-sized moths fluttering through one of my zinnia beds. I watched in the waning light and noted that there were several small moths of at least two species landing on zinnia blooms to sip nectar.

I began walking around the yard checking different blooms. Moths were there in force at my other zinnias. How about the butterfly bush? Yes, they were there too. The very invasive blue silk vine, a member of the milkweed family, is always popular with butterflies when in bloom and the little moths were working it hard.

I was surprised! There were probably more moths flying that evening than butterflies during the day. I had stumbled upon the night shift in my front yard. It is staffed by busy little pollinators I've not paid much attention to up till now. If you wish to explore another world, get out at dusk and spend some time looking for the blur of wings on the night shift.



North American Butterfly Association 12th Biennial Members' Meeting and Texas Butterfly Festival Mission, Texas, Oct. 29-Nov. 1, 2016

Every six years the NABA Members' Meeting and the Texas Butterfly Festival combine for an incredibly fun-filled event! The headquarters for this event will be the National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas features the greatest diversity of butterflies of any area in the United States, with over 227 species seen at the National Butterfly Center already this year and new species expected to be added. The Lower Rio Grande Valley boasts over 300 species, and of those, about 150 species can be seen nowhere else! Typically butterfly diversity and abundance peaks there in late October. A colorful tapestry of tropical woodland, thorn-scrub and planted gardens provides an unequaled butterflying paradise!

Many other animals, including birds and dragonflies range no further north than the Rio Grande Valley, so it is a mecca for naturalists.

Field Trips: Each day field trips will fan out throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Venues include private ranches, national wildlife refuges, the National Butterfly Center, and much more!

Presentations and other events: Workshops and programs on identification, gardening, photography, butterfly counts and other topics will be offered. Pre and post-meeting activities are also planned, such as a chance to participate in the National Butterfly Center butterfly count the day after the meeting. In addition, there will be an auction, raffles and more.

Travel, Facilities and Accommodations: The closest airport is McAllen, about 10 miles east of Mission. Harlingen is about 40 miles east and Brownsville airport is about 60 miles east. Rent a car and drive to Mission from there. The host facilities are the Hampton Inn of Mission (956) 682-0333, and the National Butterfly Center (for meetings and dinners.) A block of rooms have been reserved at the Hampton at a very attractive rate, but hurry as they'll go quick.

Meals: Your registration fee includes box lunches each day and banquet dinners Sunday and Monday nights, catered by the Rio Grande Valley Chefs Association. They will try to accommodate special dietary preferences.

Ground Transportation: Groups will travel to field trip sites by car pooling of participants' private vehicles, or at some distant locations, via provided vans.

Bring: Close-focus binoculars, cameras, videocams. No nets allowed!

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**Tentative Schedule
12th Annual NABA Members Meeting**

Sat., Oct. 29: (all times in pm)

- 4:30-5:30 Opening ceremonies for Texas Butterfly Garden.
- 6:30-7:30 Registration
- 7:30-8:30 Welcome & Program: An introduction to Lower Rio Grande Valley butterflies.

Sun., Oct. 30: (workshops held and field trips depart in am)

- 8:00-8:45 Workshops (3 concurrent topics)
- 9:15 Field trips depart
- 4:00-5:00 Field trips return
- 5:30-6:30 Social hour, book signing, exhibits
- 6:30-8:30 Banquet and Keynote Speaker

Mon., Oct. 31: (workshops held and field trips depart in am)

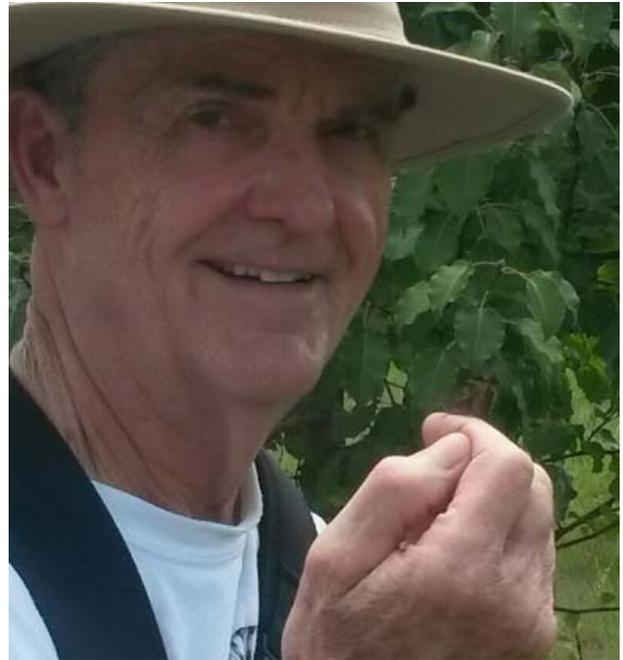
- 8:00-8:45 Workshops (3 concurrent topics)
- 9:15 Field trips depart
- 4:00-5:00 Field trips return
- 6:00-8:30 Banquet and Featured Speaker

Tues., Nov. 1: (field trips depart in am)

- 8:30 Field trips depart
- 2:00 Field trips return
- 2:30-3:00 Meeting finale

Wed., Nov. 2:

- All day NABA Butterfly Count



What's Mike O'Brien smiling about? He made a friend!



Mike coaxed this American Snout onto his finger and it stayed with him quite awhile.

How to Register: (Apologies for not getting this info in the Aug. newsletter before the registration fee went up to \$300).

You can register online at www.texasbutterflyfestival.com. Or, fill out both sides of the registration form below and mail it with check or money order payable to NABA.

**Registration Form - NABA 2016 Members' Meeting
Mission, Texas - October 29-November 1, 2016**

Complete one registration form for each member of your party (please print)

Name (as you wish if to appear on name tag) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Traveling Companion(s) (for field trip assignments) _____

Telephone (optional) _____ email address (optional) _____

Please send me a meeting packet.

Please do not send me a meeting packet, I will use the NABA website (over)

Photos from the Tennessee River Gorge fall seasonal count



Nancy Williams consults a field guide while Mike O'Brien photographs the chrysalis on a kudzu leaf, pictured below. We think it is a Silver-spotted Skipper.



Delaware Skippers are beautiful! Bright, glowing orange with no markings on the underside. Above, they have prominent black veins and a dark border on the wings.

REGISTRATION FEES

Members: \$275 per person X _____ registrants = \$ _____

Non-NABA Members \$300 per person X _____ registrants = \$ _____

Visit the NABA website, www.naba.org, to register and pay fees online
Optional Tax-Deductible Donation for the National Butterfly Center \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Registration fees are payable in full (in U.S. dollars) at time of registration. Send this form with check or money order (drawn on a U.S. bank) payable to NABA to:

**Angie, National Butterfly Center, 3333 Butterfly Park
Mission, TX 78572**

After August 16 registration fee will increase to \$300, providing space is available

SPECIAL ATTENTION

I have a physical condition which may limit my participation in field trip activities.

I have the following dietary preferences or restrictions.

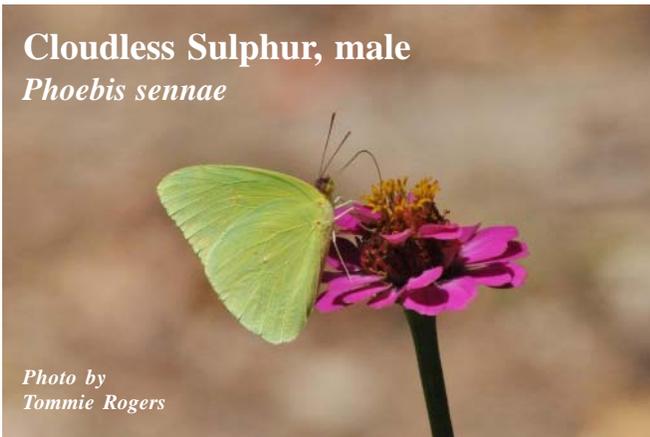
Vegetarian

Other (describe)

Tennessee River Gorge count photos - continued

Cloudless Sulphur, male
Phoebis sennae

Photo by
Tommie Rogers



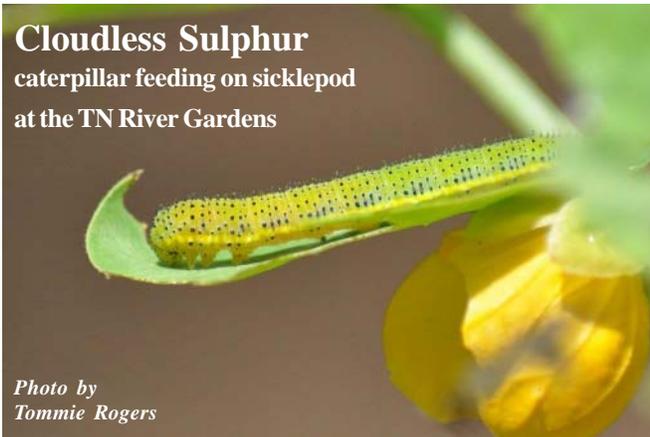
Pipevine Swallowtail

Photo by
David Spicer



Cloudless Sulphur
caterpillar feeding on sicklepod
at the TN River Gardens

Photo by
Tommie Rogers



Dave's photo catches the light perfectly to highlight the metallic blue of the hindwing on this fresh **Pipevine Swallowtail**, *Battus philenor*.



Despite an overall scarcity of butterflies in the Tennessee River Gorge, a puddle party of six Eastern Tiger Swallowtails and one Giant Swallowtail was a highlight of the day. In this comparison shot by Bill Haley, you can tell why the Giant Swallowtail is called a giant!

Ocola Skipper
Panoquina ocola

Photo by
David Spicer



We always expect the long-winged **Ocola Skipper** in late summer. This shot by David Spicer shows the very distinctive profile that makes this species identifiable at a glance. Very long forewings, held very low to the body - quite different from the triangular-shaped profile displayed by most skippers.

Variegated Fritillary
Euptoieta claudia

Photo by
David Spicer





Sleepy Orange caterpillar



Sleepy Orange chrysalis



Sleepy Orange freshly emerged

All photos Mike O'Brien on a sicklepod plant in his yard.



Photo by Mike O'Brien

When Bill Haley checked the morning of the Tennessee River Gorge count, he found a chrysalis. Less than an hour later, Mike, Harold and Bill had to go back to Bill's house (Bill forgot his binoculars!). He took Mike and Harold to look at the chrysalis and there was a beautiful, newly-emerged **Gulf Fritillary** hanging from it.



Sachem close-up: There is something incredibly cute about a furry little skipper seen up-close. Bill Haley took this shot with his cell phone as a male **Sachem** nectared on zinnia blooms. Note that the true flowers are the tiny yellow ones in the middle of each bloom. The pink petals surrounding them are like a billboard to draw the butterflies in. When choosing flowers to attract butterflies, old-fashioned single blooms are preferable to the butterflies, as it is easier to access the little yellow flowers in the middle. Double flowers were bred to appeal to *humans*, not butterflies.



On the Tennessee River Gorge count Bill Haley found this almost full-grown **American Lady** caterpillar in the “tent” it had constructed at the top of a pearly everlasting plant. The caterpillar stays hidden inside the enclosure of leaves it ties together during the day, probably coming out at night to feed.



To eat or not to eat? The **Viceroy** is a well-known mimic of the **Monarch**, and is supposedly protected because other animals have learned that the **Monarch** tastes bad. On second glance, they are a bit smaller. Note the black band that runs through the hind wings, which the **Monarch** lacks.



Double Your Pleasure, Double Your Fun! You may remember the little tune that sold Doublemint Gum. In this case two **American Ladies** provide twice the pleasure as they nectar on a purple coneflower bloom!



Monarch or Viceroy? No dark bar through the hindwing, so this is a **Monarch**. This was Mike O’Brien’s 60th yard species of 2016, a fresh female **Monarch**, which laid eggs on common milkweed plants on his property.



The **Hackberry Emperor** is one of our “friendliest” butterflies. They love to sip sweat to obtain minerals, so if you have a butterfly land on you and stay awhile, there is a very good chance it is a **Hackberry Emperor**.



Uncommon sight! You rarely see **Carolina Satyrs** nectaring at blooms!

All photos this page by Mike O'Brien



Eastern Tailed Blue, *Everes comyntas*, mated pair.



Gulf Fritillary, *Agraulis vanillae*, mated pair



We don't see many **Long-tailed Skippers**, *Urbanus proteus*, until late in the season. Dave Spicer took this nice photo.



The **Sachem**, *Atalodes campestris*, is the most common skipper in this area. (Female top, male below). Their caterpillars build nests at the base of their hostplant. They feed on Bermuda grass, Crabgrass, St. Augustine Grass and other common lawn grasses.

Photos this page by: Mike O'Brien (mated pairs at top), David Spicer (Long-tailed Skipper) and Bill Haley (Sachems).