

# On The Wing

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Photo by  
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***This is a surprise bonus November issue of "On the Wing"! I'm calling it the "Aster Edition". (You'll see why.) The weather has been unusually warm and butterflies have been active throughout October.***  
- Editor

## Why Should Butterfly Gardens Always Have Asters?

The photos on this page were taken late October in my front yard. The English Garden Asters and Aromatic Asters were in full bloom. Here are 3 reasons why you should grow asters: 1). They bloom at the end of the season - not much else is in bloom. 2). They are butterfly magnets. 3). They are beautiful!

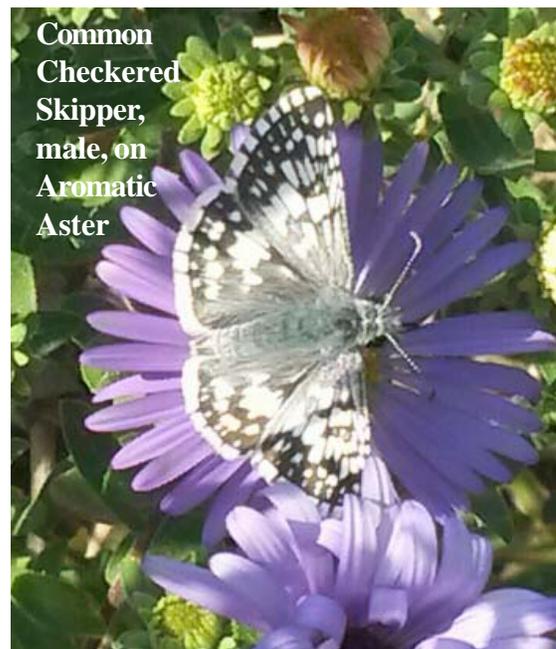


Sleepy Orange  
on English  
Garden Aster

## Butterfly Counts, 2017

*Note that all these dates are tentative, and there is a good chance some of them may be changed. Just in case you wish to plan way ahead, here are the ones on Bill's calendar right now.*

- March 31, 2017, Tennessee River Gorge (spring)
- April 15, 2017, Soddy-Daisy (spring)
- May 13, 2017, Lookout Mtn, GA (spring)
- June 2, 2017, TN River Gorge (summer)
- June 10, 2017, Soddy-Daisy (summer)
- July 1, 2017, Lookout Mtn., GA (summer)
- July 8, 2017, Stevenson, AL (summer)
- July 17, 2017, Williamsburg, KY (summer)
- Aug. 12, 2017, TN River Gorge (fall)
- Aug. 26, 2017, Soddy-Daisy (fall)
- Sept. 7, 2017, Lookout Mtn., (fall)



Common  
Checkered  
Skipper,  
male, on  
Aromatic  
Aster

# Around the Puddle

by Bill Haley

## Awesome Asters!



New England Aster

I'll come right out and say it: I Love Asters! You need faith to grow asters. While everything else in the garden is blooming, they hang around all summer and look pretty much like weeds. They could be likened to the punch line of a well-told joke: Wait for it. Wait for it.....

Asters are pushy. They start small, but grow into huge clumps. They are not shy or well-mannered plants. They don't play well with others. They crowd your other flowers out whenever they get a chance. They try, and often succeed, in taking over my garden.

If another flower in my garden needs some growing and blooming space for its "fifteen minutes of fame", the asters get trimmed. Sometimes I cut them back unmercifully. I pinch their growing tips several times during the summer, knowing they are tough and can take it. They respond by branching out even more.

I dig up or pull up seedlings and divisions by the hundreds, pot them up and give them away each spring, and still I have more than I need.

In October the final chapter in my garden unfolds and I know why I put up with the asters all summer. Most flowers are about gone when the asters come into their glory. Suddenly my yard comes alive with a glorious explosion of light purple blossoms. And this warm fall has been exceptional, as I've never seen so much butterfly and bee activity! I hope you enjoy my photos.



Cabbage White on English Garden Aster



There was a veritable explosion of **Common Checkered Skippers** in my yard this October. The day these two photos were taken, October 29, I counted at least 9. The ventral photo is on English Garden Aster and the bottom one is on Aromatic Aster.

### Tagged Monarchs Released October 19



If you've seen the excellent IMAX movie, "*Flight of the Butterflies*", you are already familiar with the story of the discovery of the wintering sites of the Monarch butterfly. In the early 1970's their wintering place was still a mystery. Many Monarchs were tagged in the United States and turned loose to continue their migration. The hope was that someone, somewhere, would find a butterfly on its wintering grounds that had been originally tagged here in the United States. It was found they winter two miles above sea level in oyamel fir groves located in the mountains of Central Mexico.

The female Monarch above was raised at the Tennessee River Gardens. Christine Bock, Tennessee Aquarium horticulturist and Monarch tagger, helps maintain the River Gardens' small butterfly-rearing enclosure. Many native butterflies go through their life cycle there each year. She attached the small adhesive-backed paper tag to its hindwing, and it was my honor to be able to release this butterfly. Hopefully it will have a successful flight to Mexico, and will contribute to a new generation which will make the return trip north next spring.



Fiery Skippers have been unusually abundant in my yard this summer, continuing into October. Top: male. Middle: female. Bottom: Fiery Skipper pair



Two more visitors to my Aromatic Asters on Oct. 29:  
Top: Little Yellow. Bottom: Variegated Fritillary



### Would You Like to Grow Asters?

I always have asters to share from my garden. They are perennials, so it benefits them to be divided. If you would like any (or all) of the asters I've mentioned, (Aromatic, New England or English Garden), I will be more than happy to dig some divisions and put them up so you can enjoy them for years to come. They like full sun, and if planted in the spring will put on a great show next Oct. and Nov..

- Bill Haley

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2016 BUTTERFLY COUNTS: TENNESSEE AND KENTUCKY

As the Appalachians region compiler, (TN, KY, WV), for the North American Butterfly Association, I write a synopsis that is published in their annual count report which contains highlights from all counts done in these states. Here are some excerpts, starting with a general overview and finishing up focusing mainly on our local counts.

A total of 23 counts were reported in the Appalachians Region in 2016, (22 in Tennessee, 1 in Kentucky). 11 were 4th of July (summer) counts, 5 were spring seasonal and 7 were fall seasonal. Only 4 count circles did spring, summer and fall counts: Meeman-Shelby Forest in West TN, Nashville South in Middle TN, Soddy-Daisy and TN River Gorge in East TN. Across the region a total of 160 counters (*many people participated in more than one count, so were counted multiple times - the actual total of counters is many less*) contributed 378.5 party hours, walked 151 miles and counted 20,515 butterflies - an average of over 54 butterflies per hour.

The Appalachian region count exhibiting the most determination and dedication had to be the spring Nashville South count. They had already rescheduled once, so decided to go ahead and attempt the count on a very windy, cold, overcast day. Five counters split into three parties. They walked a combined 8 miles and put in 6.5 hours of count effort. Their total? One species, one individual. One Eastern Tailed-Blue was found sheltering under a leaf.

Also noteworthy was our first year count in Williamsburg, KY. Seven people from the Chattanooga area volunteered to travel 200 miles to that count circle. It was one of our best counts of the year! (See summer counts).

**Spring Counts:** Most species (38) Soddy-Daisy; Most individuals (500) TN River Gorge (and we didn't see the first butterfly until it warmed up after 12:00.)

Notable sightings:

TN River Gorge: Falcate Orangetip (3), W.V. White (3), Juvenal's Duskywing (177); Pepper & Salt Skipper (2).  
Soddy-Daisy: E. Pine Elfin (2); Gorgone Checkerspot (1); Bell's Roadside Skipper (2).

**Summer Counts:** Most species (54) Williamsburg, KY.

Notable sightings:

Williamsburg, KY: E. Tiger Swallowtail (132); Harvester (2); Diana Fritillary (1); Appalachian Brown (9); Monarch (1); Silver-spotted Skipper (407).

Soddy Daisy: Diana Fritillary (7); Aphrodite Fritillary (1).

TN River Gorge: Golden-banded Skipper (3); Eufala Sk. (1)

**Fall Counts:** Most individuals (2076) Soddy-Daisy.

Notable sightings:

Soddy-Daisy: Gray Hairstreak (43).

TN River Gorge: Aphrodite Fritillary (1).



What a surprise! As I was taking photos of all the other butterflies on October 29 this **Long-tailed Skipper** flew in to enjoy the asters. Unfortunately it wouldn't let me get close enough to get a good photo, but this long-distance shot is plenty good enough for ID purposes.



**Clouded Skippers** loved the aster blooms.



This female **Sackem** couldn't resist the lure of the asters either.

*All photos this issue by Bill Haley, taken with his cell phone.*



This **Common Buckeye chrysalis** was found on lespedeza plants at my hawk lookout on Soddy Mountain. Its host plant, narrow-leaved plantain, is abundant there.



**Gulf Fritillary chrysalis** found on red cedar at Soddy Mountain hawk lookout. Gulfs have been extremely plentiful this fall.