Fall Seasonal Butterfly Counts

Sat., Aug. 12: Tennessee River Gorge
Meet: 9:30 at the Food City parking lot on Signal Mountain Road. Leader: Bill Haley, for info call (423) 326-9248, or e-mail wgh@tnaqua.org

Sat., Aug. 26, Soddy-Daisy, TN
Meet: 9:30 at Daisy United Methodist, 9508 Dayton Pike, Soddy-Daisy, TN, Leader: Bill Haley. The fall seasonal count in the Soddy-Daisy count circle. Join us for the day, or part of the day.

Thurs., Sept. 7, Lookout Mtn., GA
Meet: 9:30 at the International Towing and Recovery Museum on Broad Street. Leader, Bill Haley (see contact info above)
Our third fall seasonal count. This will be the last scheduled NABA count of 2017.

How To Prepare for a Butterfly Count!

Binoculars, preferably close-focusing, will help you note subtle field marks you might otherwise miss on butterflies you are unable to approach closely. Bring plenty to drink (hydration is important in hot weather) and snacks. Long pants, a hat and comfortable, sturdy shoes, (sandals or crocs are bad choices, as we may wade through tall grasses, briars and poison ivy). It is wise to use sunblock, and possibly some bug spray on lower pants legs to discourage chiggers and ticks.

Note: There is a $3 NABA fee per participant.

Lookout Mountain, GA count totals:
The Lookout Mountain count was conducted on Saturday, July 1. Counters were: Phil and Martha Delestrez, David and Judee Spicer, Nancy Williams, Mike O’Brien, and Bill Haley. The day was cloudy with the possibility of showers or thunderstorms, but happily the rain held off until almost 4:00. Temperature ranged from 76-90 F, humidity was very high and winds were light to moderate. Counting parties consisted of Bill Haley, Nancy Williams and Mike O’Brien; Phil and Martha Delestrez; and David and Judee Spicer. Splitting into three parties was significant, as Bill’s party found 32 species, Phil’s party found 22 species (including 4 species nobody else found); Dave and Judee ended up with 34 species, (which included an incredible 15 species that weren’t found by either of the other parties)! Combined they totalled 18.25 hours of count effort and walked 9 miles. Their dedication is much appreciated!

Totals, Species and Numbers:
Pipevine Swallowtail 8, Black Sw. 5, Spicebush Sw. 1, E. Tiger Sw. 6, Giant Sw. 2, Cabbage White 6, Clouded Sulphur 2, Orange Su. 13, Cloudless Su. 6, Little Yellow 2, Sleepy Orange 29, Coral Hairstreak 1, Banded Ha. 1, Striped Ha. 1, Gray Ha. 5, Red-banded Ha. 10, E. Tailed-Blue 169, Summer Azure 8, Am. Snout 25, Gulf Fritillary 3, Variegated Fr. 6, Silvery Checkerspot 12, Pearl Crescent 61, Question Mark 2, E. Comma 1, Am. Lady 6, Red Admiral 1, Com. Buckeye 42, Red-sp. Purple 6, Goatweed Leafwing 1, Hackberry Emp. 5, S. Pearly-Eye 2, N. Pearly-Eye 2, Gemmed Satyr 3, Carolina Sa. 10, Little Wood Satyr 2, Com. Wood Nymph 7, Monarch 4, Silver-sp. Sk. 8, Long-tailed Sk. 1, S. Cloudywing 4, Horace’s Duskywing 1, Wild Indigo Du. 1, Com. Checkered Sk. 9, Clouded Sk. 5, Least Sk. 10, Fiery Sk. 2, Crossline Sk. 1, Sachem 54, Delaware Sk. 2, Ocola Sk. 1, Unid. Dk. Sk. sp. 2, white sp. 2, hair-streak sp. 4. Total: 51 species, 583 individuals.
Join the Crowd!

North American Butterfly Association

The North American Butterfly Association, NABA, was started in 1994 to popularize the study of butterflies through observation and identification through use of field marks rather than collecting.

The Tennessee Valley NABA chapter was formed in 2008. The chapter’s territory is centered around southeastern Tennessee, but also encompasses areas of northwestern Georgia and northeastern Alabama. Anyone who joins the national organization within a zip code area beginning with 374, 373, 307, 357 or 359 will automatically become a member of the chapter.

It is also possible for people living outside our zip code areas to become members of the Tennessee Valley chapter. When you join or renew your NABA membership, specify that you’d like to be affiliated with the Tennessee Valley NABA chapter.

Joining online is easy. Go to their website at http://www.naba.org and click on Membership. Individual $35, Family $45, Institution/Library $60. There also other sponsorship levels if interested.

Members receive quarterly publications from NABA, “American Butterflies” and “Butterfly Gardener”, as well as monthly “On the Wing” newsletters (March-Nov.) from the local Tennessee Valley NABA chapter.

**Mirror Image?** We usually feel lucky to find one Giant Swallowtail on a butterfly count. Above is a sight that is quite unusual - two Giant Swallowtails, *Papilio cresphontes*, puddling face-to-face to form almost a mirror image. Judee Spicer got this great shot, as well as the one to the right, during the Lookout Mountain, GA count on July 1. Joining them were at least four Pipevine Swallowtails in the same “puddle party”.

The Red-banded Hairstreak, *Calycopis cecrops*, was found by all three counting parties on the Lookout Mountain count. This beautiful little butterfly has an unusual life cycle. It seems their caterpillars feed on moist, decaying leaves of their hostplants on the ground, and not so much on living leaves, as most caterpillars do. They are thought to associate with sumacs and maybe oaks in our area. Butterflies of the East Coast states: “Detritus-feeding appears unique among East Coast butterflies, and deserves careful study. For example, are variations in the hindwing color band linked to larval food?”
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2016 NABA BUTTERFLY COUNTS REPORT

I recently received the 2016 Count Report from NABA. It contains totals from all counts in the U.S., Canada and Mexico that took place last year. They are available to anyone. I believe the cost is $7. If you want to order one for next year, please let me know. There is a lot of interesting information, and I thought I’d share some of the highlights.

Count results provide abundant information about the distribution and relative population sizes of butterflies. Comparisons across years can be used to monitor changes in populations and study the effects of weather and habitat change on butterflies.

For 2016, 401 butterfly counts are published (32 Spring Seasonal counts, 314 4th/1st of July counts, 54 fall seasonal counts). Total counts held in recent years were 442 in 2015, 444 in 2014, 468 in 2013, 480 in 2012, and 471 in 2011. The all-time high was 509 in 2006” (1st of July counts are conducted in Canada).

“The 380 U.S. counts in 2016 were held in 43 states plus the District of Columbia. Florida, as usual, led the number of counts (52, down from 57 last year), California (25, down 3 from last year) and Tennessee (22).” That’s right folks, Tennessee conducts the third most butterfly counts in the country! “We welcome 10 new counts this year—9 in the U.S., one in Mexico.” (Our Williamsburg, KY count was one of those).

Of the counts I personally compile, Stevenson, AL was the only count in Alabama and Williamsburg, KY was the only count in Kentucky.

Nationwide Maximum Counts of Individual Species:
- Eastern Tailed-Blue 413: Soddy-Daisy, TN
- Juvenal’s Duskywing 177 Tennessee River Gorge, TN

Sadly, the number of U.S. counts has decreased in recent years. There are a large number of counts nationwide, but a much smaller pool of count compilers. For instance, I currently compile 11 counts, Bart Jones in West Tennessee 9. I often wonder, will anyone continue them when we are no longer able to do so?

Bill Haley, President TN Valley NABA
Phil Delestrez took the photo of the Northern Pearly-Eye, *Enodia anthedon*, to the left, at Cloudland Canyon State Park. Notice that the club of the antenna is black at the base, with an orange tip. The photo by David Spicer (below left), shows a Southern Pearly-Eye, *Enodia portlandia*. Note the totally orange antennal clubs. Phil Delestrez photographed our largest satyr, the Common Wood Nymph, *Cercyonis pegala*, (below right). It has a distinctive creamy forewing patch.
The Carolina Satyr, *Hermeuptychia sosybius*, is our smallest satyr species.

One of the fun things as you learn about butterflies is trying to find the earlier stages in their life cycle. In last month’s newsletter I mentioned that it was fairly easy to find butterfly eggs if you keep an eye out for adult females as they look for the proper host plant to lay eggs on. This requires a bit of time and luck, but a count is a good opportunity to spend ample time with the butterflies and to observe host plant-searching and egg laying behavior. Nancy Williams took the photos of a Gulf Fritillary egg (top) and Crossline Skipper (below). We also found a couple of caterpillars: a Gulf Fritillary caterpillar on passionflower and a Goatweed Leafwing caterpillar in a rolled-up leaf of Prairie Tea, a member of the croton family. While immatures don’t count towards a species total on counts, they are always reported.

Bill Haley holds a blade of grass, upon which he’d just observed a female Crossline Skipper deposit an egg. You can barely see the tiny white dot near his fingertip.

Above: Little Yellow is the smallest regularly occurring sulphur species in our area. Unlike many species in the Eurema family that cannot withstand winter cold, it regularly pushes further north than the others. Occasionally, another even smaller sulphur, the Dainty Sulphur, comes as far north as Tennessee in late summer.
Know Where They Live! One of the tricks to finding certain butterfly species is knowing the type of habitat they prefer. Nancy Williams took the photo above of a Banded Hairstreak, *Satyrium calanus*, as it perched a couple of feet off the ground on the broad leaf of a greenbriar. Bandeds are most often found on shaded woodland paths with dappled areas of sunlight, where they like to bask. Their larval hostplant is oak.

Phil Delestrez was pleased to find and photograph this Coral Hairstreak, *Satyrium titus*, at Cloudland Canyon State Park. It was the only one found on the count. Since it was the first time he’d seen this species, it was a life butterfly. Congratulations Phil!

Phil also got a picture of the Gray Hairstreak, *Strymon melinus*, to the right. It is somewhat uncommon to see one with the wings open, so the dorsal side isn't often seen. Usually when sitting they will close their wings, showing only the ventral side of the wings. This widespread species is a generalist in its choice of host plants, using primarily legumes and mallows, but also many other plant species. It is our most common hairstreak species throughout the summer.
The Variegated Fritillary, *Euptoieta claudia*, perched on orange butterfly weed, and Gulf Fritillary, *Agraulis vanillae*, on thistle, seem to share some taxonomic links, according to *Butterflies of the East Coast*, by Cech and Tudor. This is at least partially due to their use of passionflowers as a host plant. Both were photographed by Judee Spicer on the Lookout Mountain count. She has gotten some really great shots as she has helped husband Dave on counts this year. In fact, all the Spicer family are very good photographers who submit lots of good shots to use in this newsletter. *(I suspect there is some friendly competition between them to see who can get the best shot.)*

You are receiving your August issue of *On the Wing* very early. I will not return until well after the newsletter’s usual publication date, due to an extended trip out west. We will leave on July 15. First stop will be Williamsburg, Kentucky, where we’ll do the Williamsburg, KY butterfly count on July 16. Before that will be the Stevenson, Alabama count on Thursday, July 13. This means I’ll do two counts in four days, one the most southern of my counts, the other the most northern. With visits planned to many National Parks and National Monuments, I’ve been studying my western butterflies, but they will be a HUGE challenge!

- Bill Haley
Late Summer is Skipper Time! We are starting to see an increase in skippers as we move into mid-summer. Their numbers are beginning to grow, but will hit their peak as we move into late July and August. Top: Long-tailed Skipper, *Urbanus proteus*. Bottom left: Fiery Skipper (male), *Hylephila phyleus*, bottom right: Sachem (male), *Atalopedes campestris*. 