

# Badger Butterfly

The e-Newsletter of the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association **SEPTEMBER, 2010**

WEB SITE: <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabawba/>

## 1 HIGHLIGHTS OF AVOCA FIELD TRIP

On August 14, Mike Reese led our annual field trip to the Avoca/Blue River Area. The results were quite spectacular! We found 29 species, more than in 2007, which was an outstanding butterfly year! And we found an outstanding selection of migrant and immigrant butterflies from the south in high numbers: Common Buckeye, an incredible 5 of the rare Gray Hairstreaks, Painted Lady, the rare Common Checkered-Skipper, the usually scarce Little Yellow and Dainty Sulphur, and 3 of the

ultra-rare **Sleepy Oranges**. And at the last stop of the day there was an astonishing abundance of sulphurs, crescents, blues and coppers, with many groups of butterflies “puddling” on the dirt roads. It was the most spectacular butterflying we have ever seen in Wisconsin! Below is the full list of what was seen with the most unusual species in bold-face type.



Sleepy Orange. Wings closed / open.  
Photo on right by Mike Reese



Gray Hairstreak



Common Checkered-Skipper.  
Photo by Mike Reese.

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Viceroy 2  
 Eastern Comma 3  
**Gray Comma 1**  
 Eastern Tailed-Blue 86  
 Summer Azure 1  
**Common Buckeye 6**  
**American Copper 44**  
 Pearl Crescent 57  
 Hackberry Emperor 4  
**Aphrodite Fritillary 4**

Great Spangled Fritillary 5  
**Gray Hairstreak 5**  
 American Lady 3  
**Painted Lady 2**  
 Red Admiral 14  
 Monarch 28  
 Common Wood-Nymph 3  
 Clouded Sulphur 12  
**Dainty Sulphur 10**  
**Little Yellow 128**

Orange Sulphur 11  
**Sleepy Orange 3**  
 Black Swallowtail 8  
 Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 5  
 Cabbage White 4  
**Leonard’s Skipper 9**  
**Common Checkered-Skipper 1**  
**Common Sootywing 10**  
 Silver-spotted Skipper 1

## 2 HIGHLIGHTS OF PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY TRIP



American Snout

A group of 14 people participated in the trip, led by Dreux Watermolen, at Pheasant Branch Conservancy in Middleton on August 28. We found 18 butterfly species including unusual ones. The **American Snout** is a rare stray from the south and has a protruding “nose” that mimics

the stem of a leaf. It often hides by clinging to a bare vertical stick, looking like a dead leaf. (They sometimes cling to a car’s radio antenna!) The **Little Yellow** is also a scarce stray from the south. (The American Snout and Little Yellow were new records for the Conservancy.) We also saw a Monarch caterpillar, and observed the eggs laid by a Clouded Sulphur. Here is the full list for the trip, with highlights in bold type:

**Black Swallowtail 13**  
 Cabbage White many  
 Clouded Sulphur many  
 Orange Sulphur 4  
**Little Yellow 1**  
 Eastern Tailed-Blue 4

Summer Azure 5  
**American Snout 1**  
 Great Spangled Fritillary 2  
 Pearl Crescent many  
 Red Admiral 4  
**Common Buckeye 8**

Viceroy 4  
 Monarch 17  
 Silver-spotted Skipper 3  
 Least Skipper 3  
**Fiery Skipper 1**  
**Peck's Skipper 1**

### 3 HIGHLIGHTS OF MAGNIFICENT MONARCHS AT OLBRICH GARDENS

On August 29 we held a class on Monarchs at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. About a dozen people learned about the Monarch's life cycle including its long migration to the overwintering site in the mountains of central Mexico. We saw that, at least in Wisconsin, the Monarch has recovered nicely from the record low numbers this past winter. The weather conditions have been especially favorable this year. We walked around the gardens and observed Monarchs and other butterflies including Common Buckeye, Painted Lady, Silver-spotted Skipper and Viceroy.



### 4 RECENT BUTTERFLY SIGHTINGS AT [www.wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org)

Mike Reese's [www.wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org) website received 202 reports in August detailing thousands of individual butterflies. The commonest butterflies of August were Clouded Sulphur and Monarch.

**Many migrant and immigrant butterflies were reported.** Migrants (M) cannot survive our winter so they travel south in fall and a subsequent generation travels back north in spring. Immigrants (I) from the South stray northward in the summer, but they cannot survive our winter and do not return south. These are detailed below, showing the number of observer reports received (out of 202 observer reports in August).

SCARCEST AUGUST PERMANENT RESIDENTS	AUGUST REPORTS
Leonard's Skipper	13
Common Branded Skipper	7
Wild Indigo Duskywing	6
Karner Blue	4
Bronze Copper	4
Harvester	4
Green Comma	2
Satyr Comma	1
Purplish Fritillary	1
Columbine Duskywing	1

MIGRANTS & IMMIGRANTS		AUGUST REPORTS
Red Admiral	M	many
Monarch	M	many
Common Buckeye	M	64
Fiery Skipper	I	32
Painted Lady	M	29
Little Yellow	M?	16
Gray Hairstreak	I	9
American Snout	I	5
Giant Swallowtail	I	4
Variegated Fritillary	I	4
Common Checkered-Skipper	I	4
Dainty Sulphur	I	3
Sleepy Orange	I	3
Funereal Duskywing	I	3
Checkered White	I	2
Pipevine Swallowtail	I	1

## 5 VERY RARE PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAILS SEEN IN WISCONSIN: THE BENEFIT OF PLANTING PIPEVINE !

The Pipevine Swallowtail is a very rare but fascinating insect. A permanent resident of the South, including southern Illinois, it seldom has been found in Wisconsin.

Its food plant is a vine, **Dutchman's-pipe** (*Aristolochia macrophylla*). Dutchman's-pipe is poisonous and the caterpillars store the toxins in their bodies passing it on to the butterfly. The caterpillars are so toxic that the eggs of parasitic wasps injected into the caterpillars die! The butterflies are protected from bird predation. Some other butterflies mimic the Pipevine Swallowtail and so are also protected from predation, such as the

female Black Swallowtail and dark form of the female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail.

I have checked the published Wisconsin butterfly records in the newsletter of the Wisconsin Entomological Society and the newsletter of the Lepidopterist's Society for the years 1969 to 2000 and found no records for Pipevine Swallowtail in Wisconsin during those 32 years. Before 1969, James Ebner in Butterflies of Wisconsin (1970)

mentions only a few specific records, the next earliest being 1955. It appears that there were no published reports of Pipevine Swallowtail for the 45 years from 1956 to 2000!



Dutchman's-pipe  
*Aristolochia macrophylla*

### THE HISTORY OF PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL IN WISCONSIN

DATE	LOCATION	COUNTY	DETAILS
July 15, 1930		Door Co.	most northern record
?	Oostburg	Sheboygan Co.	Colony for "many years".
summer, 1955	Fish Lake	Waushara Co.	
August 4 - Sept. 11, 2001	Madison	Dane Co.	home.
August 13-14, 2001	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	Boerner Botanical Gardens
June 7, 2007		Dane Co.	
June 8, 2007	Necedah	Juneau Co.	Necedah Nat. Wildlife Refuge
July 5, 2007	Madison	Dane Co.	UW Botany Garden
July 18, 2007	Madison	Dane Co.	
July 23 - August 2, 2007	Plover	Portage Co.	
July 24-September 19, 2007	Madison	Dane	Olbrich Botanical Gardens
August 5, 2007	Monches	Washington Co.	
August 30, 2010		Dane Co.	Ken Wood

So the modern history of Pipevine Swallowtail in Wisconsin begins in 2001 when caterpillars were found on Pipevine at a home in Madison. (August 4-Sept.11). Then 9 days later, caterpillars were found on Pipevine in Milwaukee at Boerner Botanical Garden (August 13 & 14). But in the next 5 years there were no further records. But in 2007, Wisconsin was host to several Pipevine Swallowtails. None were reported in 2009.

This year (August 30, 2010) there has been a report of Pipevine Swallowtails in Dane County, from **naturalist Ken Wood**, whose 8 foot high fence has accumulated *30 feet of Aristolochia!* The caterpillars were first noticed when they began to stray on to adjacent garden plants! Ken recognized them as Pipevine



Photo by Edgar Spalding

Swallowtail caterpillars. He found 2-3 butterflies, several caterpillars and two batches of eggs.

We encourage gardeners to plant Pipevine because these Swallowtails do come into Wisconsin looking for this plant. For every Swallowtail that finds

*Aristolochia* there must be many more that come into the state but a) do not find *Aristolochia* or b) find it and reproduce but the butterflies and caterpillars go unrecognized and unreported. The butterflies can not survive Wisconsin winters but it can temporarily breed here, raising a few generations. The more *Aristolochia* that is planted in the state, the more encounters we will have with this beautiful and very remarkable butterfly.

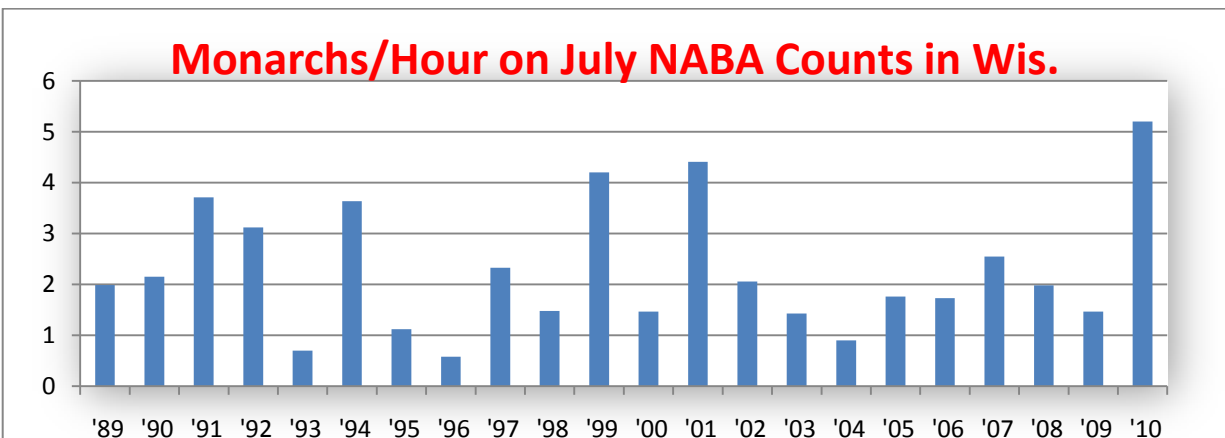


Pipevine Swallowtail  
caterpillar.  
Photo by Ken Wood.

## 6 HUGE MONARCH MIGRATION 2010

Last winter, the Monarch population, overwintering in the mountains of central Mexico, was at the lowest level recorded since the overwintering sites were discovered in 1975. Worse, serious rain storms followed by freezing temperatures killed a large portion of the Monarchs so that they started their spring migration with a record small population.

Fortunately favorable weather conditions have prevailed this year: Wisconsin had an extremely early spring, the weather was somewhat warmer than average with plenty of rain so that Milkweed and nectar plants thrived. We mentioned in a previous issue that in 2 NABA butterfly surveys in July that Monarch's were doing well. Below is a graph of Monarch density (number per hour of observing) totaled from up to 6 all-day NABA counts each year, around the southern half of Wisconsin, over the past 22 years.



Migrating Monarchs nectaring on goldenrod. Photo by Mike Reese.

As you can see, the density of Monarchs in the first half of July 2010 was the highest in the past 22 years of surveying! So it appears that, at least in the southern half of Wisconsin, the Monarchs have indeed snapped back, building up their population.

Then in the last part of August the Monarchs began their migration south. The peak of migration averages August 29 to September 9. Just as west winds can cause hawk migration to become concentrated along Lake Michigan, the Monarchs were also concentrated along the Lake by west winds. They moved through the Manitowoc area on September 3, 4 and especially on the 5th. Mike Reese reported very strong migration from Two Rivers: "I made actual counts of the largest groups of Monarchs, most of which were feeding on Goldenrod, so the total [1100+] is probably very conservative." On the same day, there was a report submitted to the website Journey North (that monitors Monarch migration): "My husband and I are traveling north on I-43. When we were close to Port Washington we began seeing what would amount to 1000's of Monarchs flying south along the road. This continued until we got past Sheboygan. I had never seen anything like this."

When we arrived at Manitowoc the next day, the massive migration was over but we still photographed a few groups of Monarchs roosting for the evening during migration in the same manner that they roost in Mexico. This all confirms that the Monarchs have built up a strong population in Wisconsin this year. However, the overwintering population will come from all over eastern North America so it will be interesting to see what the final count is in Mexico this winter.



Migrating Monarchs roosting in tree overnight.

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## 7 North American Butterfly Association (NABA) 9th Biennial Members' Meeting

Mission, Texas  
October 28-31, 2010



Crimson Patch

SWBA is a Wisconsin chapter of NABA. The next NABA Biennial Members' Meeting will be held October 28-31, 2010 in **Mission, Texas**. The 2010 Meeting will (we hope) celebrate the official opening of the first major building at the **National Butterfly Center**, the Welcome Center. Mark your calendars now--we look forward to seeing you there!

There will be all-day field trips on Friday and Saturday, and a half-day trip on Sunday. 150 species of butterflies have been seen in the Lower Rio Grande Valley! We have a good chance of seeing spectacular Red-bordered Pixies, Mexican Bluewings, Bordered Patches, and Two-barred Flashers. Other tantalizing possibilities include Ruby-spotted Swallowtail, Cyna Blue, Malachite, Gray Cracker and Guava Skipper.

(NOTE: Reserve rooms at Hampton Inn instead of Hawthorne Suites.)

**REGISTRATION BROCHURE:** [http://www.naba.org/ftp/members\\_meeting\\_reg\\_brochure\\_2010.pdf](http://www.naba.org/ftp/members_meeting_reg_brochure_2010.pdf)

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## 8 BUTTERFLY NEWS

### Declines of Prairie Butterflies in the Midwestern USA -- Ann and Scott Swengel, et al.

“Dear Butterfliers,

Ann and I are pleased to announce a new article (attached) by me, Dennis Schlicht, Frank Olsen, and Ann Swengel, based on long-term data that has just been published online, **Declines of prairie butterflies in the midwestern USA**. This paper is an expansion of the poster I presented in England and is available free from Springer Open Choice at <http://www.springerlink.com/content/1732444592662434/fulltext.pdf> or by going to the Journal of Insect Conservation Online First section and scanning through the articles in ascending number order until getting to articles posted 13 August 2010.

The trends of tallgrass prairie skippers shown here, although disastrous, underestimate the decline in Iowa and Minnesota for several reasons:

1. In statistical testing we only include sites with adequate data for testing, which eliminates many sites from inclusion that had 100% declines of a specialist we know about.
2. Nearly all sites with long time series were the top sites to begin with, which are likely to take a longer time to show large declines than medium or low-quality sites.
3. Recent government sponsored surveys not included here show another round of huge declines for Poweshiek Skipperling in Iowa and Minnesota.
4. Some species went undetectable by the late 1980s and early 1990s, so didn't register as a presence when the study began. Hence, they cannot show a decline since then.

Some good news is that conservation based on existing knowledge of specialists' management responses gets far better results (as shown by Regal Fritillaries and Karner Blues in Wisconsin) than typical management. So declines like this are not inevitable.

The Ecological Interpretations and Conservation Conclusion section of Discussion contain some of our new insights explaining the observed land-use effects on prairies and butterflies.”

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**The Badger ButterFlyer flits to you every month (every other month in winter).  
The next issue will be in OCTOBER.**

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**SWBA**

The Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association (SWBA) is a non-profit Wisconsin chapter of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) which is the largest organization of people interested in butterflies. SWBA promotes public awareness, conservation and the enjoyment of butterflies through observation with close-focusing binoculars, chapter field trips, educational meetings, photography, butterfly gardening, monitoring and travel. SWBA's events are open to the public.

To become a member of SWBA simply join NABA. Membership benefits include 2 color quarterly magazines "American Butterflies" and "Butterfly Gardening". Please use the membership form on the SWBA Web site at <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabawba/>

Our e-Newsletter, the Badger ButterFlyer, will be published monthly in spring to fall, and every other month in winter. Send any news notes to the editor, Karl Legler, at [karlndot@charter.net](mailto:karlndot@charter.net)

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