

Badger ButterflyFlyer

The e-Newsletter of the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association **OCTOBER 2009**

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

1 SWBA MEETING: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2009

At this meeting the speaker will be butterfly expert **Ann Swengel**. Her presentation will be on: **Adventures in Muskegs and Kettleholes: A Presentation on Bog Butterflies of Northern Wisconsin.**

Where: Warner Park Community Recreation Center at 1625 Northport Drive in Madison.

When: 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. **October 6 Meeting: Ann Swengel on Bog Butterflies.**
2. **Highlights of Pheasant Branch Field Trip.**
3. **September Butterfly Reports.**
4. **Butterfly Gardening: Monarchs Need Milkweed.**
5. **Butterfly Gifts for Christmas.**
6. **Recent Research on Monarch Migration.**

Ann Swengel is an internationally-known butterfly researcher. She is the author of numerous scientific publications related to butterfly population biology and is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Insect Conservation. She was vice president of NABA from 1992-2003 and international editor or co-editor of the NABA Butterfly Counts from 1991-early 2005.



Frigga Fritillary

Everyone is welcome to attend this free program. We will have door prizes, displays, books, handouts and plenty of time afterwards to enjoy refreshments and talk with our speaker Ann Swengel and other butterfly, butterfly gardening, and photography enthusiasts.

DIRECTIONS: On Madison's north side, from the intersection of Sherman Avenue and Northport Drive (= Hwy 113) go west on Northport Drive for about 1/4 mile, then turn south into Warner Park. Turn immediately right into the Community Center parking lot. When you enter the Community Recreation Center, we will be in the meeting room on the left.

2 HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT FIELD TRIP TO PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY

September 12 was a beautiful sunny day and 25 people participated in the SWBA field trip to Pheasant Branch Conservancy in Middleton. Pheasant Branch is a regionally significant natural area. It contains a marsh with open water, springs, prairies, meadows, lowland forest, and wooded hills. These various habitats sustain a wide variety of plants and animals, including some that are threatened or endangered. Aply led by Ann Thering and Dreux Watermolen, the group found 43 butterflies of 11 different species. The commonest butterfly was the Monarch because this was the peak of their migration southward to the mountains of central Mexico. The butterflies ranged in size from the tiny Least Skipper (our smallest butterfly) up to Swallowtails (our largest butterflies). We visited the look-out at one of the



Pheasant Branch Conservancy



springs that supplies water to the marsh, and hiked up the hill to the look-out where we had a spectacular view of the entire conservancy.



Here is the list of butterflies seen:

Black Swallowtail 4
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 1
Cabbage White 9
Clouded Sulphur 3

Orange Sulphur 1
Bronze Copper 1
Eastern Tailed-Blue 2
Meadow Fritillary 1

Monarch 19
Least Skipper 1
Peck's Skipper 1

3 SEPT. BUTTERFLIES REPORTED TO www.wisconsinbutterflies.org

During September the Wisconsin Butterflies Website received 45 reports detailing 411 butterflies of 33 species. Interesting butterflies that were last seen in the first third of September were Red-spotted Purple, Aphrodite Fritillary, Leonard's Skipper, Tawny-edged Skipper, Compton Tortoiseshell and Milbert's Tortoiseshell. Butterflies that were last seen at mid-month were Variegated Fritillary, Peck's Skipper and Pink-edged Sulphur. American Lady and Painted Lady were seen on the 18th.



There were several reports of the few species that will overwinter in the butterfly stage, such as Mourning Cloak, Eastern Comma, Gray Comma, Compton and Milbert's Tortoiseshells. Next spring we will see the same individuals again! Most sightings were of butterflies that are permanent

residents (they will survive our winter) but cannot survive as an adult butterfly. These species will survive winter in the egg, caterpillar or pupa stage so we will see the species flying again next year. The Monarch, of course, cannot survive our winter in any stage and has to migrate south to the mountains of central Mexico in order to survive over winter. It is our only species with such an extended migration. Some other species cannot survive our winter in any stage so each year the species must repopulate the state from more hospitable areas.

September sightings of these species include: Orange Sulphur, Giant Swallowtail, and the scarce Painted Lady and Variegated Fritillary.

The butterfly season is slowing down but sightings may continue for a month or more depending on how soon we get a hard freeze.

4 BUTTERFLY GARDENING by Dorothy Legler, Master Gardener MONARCHS HAVE NEEDS: MILKWEEDS!

Monarchs are the strongest migrants in the insect world. Because of migration their numbers in Wisconsin peak in mid-September. They will arrive at their overwintering sites in the mountains of Central Mexico by November. Monarchs can fly up to 50 miles a day, and travel as much as 2,800 miles! Late blooming plants are necessary to furnish nectar for the migrating Monarchs.



Milkweeds are the Monarch's only caterpillar food plants. So start thinking ahead to next year's season, when the 3rd and 4th generation of the individual's that migrated to Mexico, return to Wisconsin and require milkweed for their reproduction.

Now is a good time to collect some milkweed seeds. The pods are bursting open to enable the seeds

to sail away and find a place to germinate. You can plant the seed in fall or wait until spring. If planted outside, plant in late fall (November) so that they don't germinate until spring. Seeds germinating in September and October are too small and won't be able to stand the stress of winter.

Collected seeds can be stored in an unheated garage and planted in the spring: Plant in a moist medium, cover with plastic and refrigerate 3 to 6 weeks -- longer if needed -- until germination. Detailed planting directions may be found in the valuable book Growing Perennials in Cold Climates by Mike Heger and John Whitman. (Directions for milkweeds are listed under the genus name *Asclepias*.) So as the Monarchs take flight, gather some milkweed seeds before *they* too take flight!

5 BUTTERFLY GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Since the next issue of Badger Butterflyer is not until December, we thought we'd include a list of recommended basic books and equipment that would make great gifts for anyone that enjoys butterflies. Prices are from Amazon.com unless a specific source is mentioned. Postage is additional.

BINOCULARS

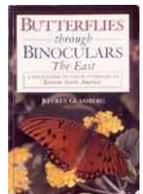
- The **Pentax Papilio 8.5X21** is specifically designed for observing butterflies, dragonflies and other insects. They are the closest focusing binoculars available (yes they also focus to infinity so you can observe birds and the moon). They can focus as close as 19 inches which provides spectacular views of butterflies. At six feet you see the butterfly as well as if you were holding it in your hand 10" from your eye. And at the close focus you see the butterfly five times better than if you were holding it up to your eye! They are sharp, very light weight, usable even while wearing glasses, and relatively inexpensive. (A must for the tiny damselflies!) These binoculars are very popular and have gotten rave reviews. We have used them for the past 4 years and love them! They are currently \$129 at Eagle Optics in Middleton www.eagleoptics.com.
- If intensive birding is your primary interest then there are some larger binoculars that are also good for butterflies: Eagle Optics' **Ranger SRT 8X32** focuses down to three feet and costs about \$310. For bigger optics or more power there are the Eagle Optics' **Ranger SRT 8X42** or **10X42**, both focus to about 5 feet and cost around \$335.



BOOKS: Butterfly Field Guides

The butterfly field guides that SWBA recommends are:

- First, Jeffrey Glassberg's **Butterflies Through Binoculars, the East**. (1999) \$24.95 Numerous excellent photographs, range maps, food plants, and contains flight period information specific for Wisconsin! This is carried by the UW Arboretum Bookstore at 1207 Seminole Highway, Madison.
(To download the free PDF file **Quick Index to Butterflies of Wisconsin** that can be printed out and pasted into the inside back cover pages, specifically for Glassberg's guide, just click on this link: <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabawba/Glassberg%20Index.pdf>)
- If you want a second guide, we recommend Kenn Kaufman's **Kaufman Field Guide to Butterflies of North America**. (2006) \$13.57
(To download the free PDF file **Quick Index to Butterflies of Wisconsin** that can be printed out and pasted into the inside back cover pages, specifically for Kaufman. just click on this link: <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabawba/Kaufman%20Index.pdf>)
- If you would like a third guide, we recommend Larry Weber's **Butterflies of the North Woods**. (2006) \$14.21 Many of southern Wisconsin's scarcer species are not included but the coverage that is provided is very good and specific to Wisconsin. (Ignore the incorrect Hackberry Emperor on page 158.)



BOOKS: Caterpillars

- Jeffrey Glassberg, **Caterpillars in the Field and Garden**. (2005) \$19.77 900 photographs. How to identify the butterfly caterpillars of North America.
- David L. Wagner, **Caterpillars of Eastern North America**. (2005) \$19.77 1,200 photographs. 700 butterfly and moth caterpillars.

BOOKS: Dragonflies and Damselflies

- Karl and Dorothy Legler, **Dragonflies of Wisconsin**. (2007) \$14.00 201 color photos. Available exclusively at the UW Arboretum Bookstore at 1207 Seminole Highway,



Madison, WI 53711-3726. To order by phone with a credit card, call (608) 263-7888. The bookstore is open on weekdays from 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. and weekends 12:30 - 4 p.m.

- Bob DuBois, **Damselflies of the North Woods**. (2005) \$12.89 Photos by Mike Reese. (Only the Pentax Papilio binoculars described above can do justice to these small but exquisitely beautiful creatures.)

BOOKS: Butterfly Gardening

- David Mizejewski, **Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife**. (2004) \$10.36
- Donald and Lilian Stokes, **Stokes Butterfly Book, The Complete Guide to Butterfly Gardening, Identification, and Behavior**. (1991) \$11.19

MISCELLANEOUS

- Rick Cech and Guy Tudor, **Butterflies of the East Coast: An Observer's Guide**. (2007) \$21.75 This is a large and outstanding reference work on butterflies. Packed with detailed information about behavior, biology and ecology of butterflies along with species accounts and numerous superb photographs covering 243 species.
- **Membership in SWBA** (the Wisconsin Chapter of NABA) is always an excellent gift and includes the quarterly publications **American Butterflies** and **Butterfly Gardening**. To **Join SWBA** print out the form from our Web site and mail it. Individual \$30, Family \$40.
- Finally, a source of butterfly related items is the **NABA online store** at www.butterflybuzz.com NABA members receive a 10% discount!

6 BUTTERFLY NEWS NOTE:

LATEST RESEARCH ON MONARCH MIGRATION: DO ANTENNAS POINT THE WAY?

“ScienceDaily (Sep. 25, 2009) — The annual migration of monarch butterflies from across eastern North America to a specific grove of fir trees in Mexico has long fascinated scientists who have sought to understand just how these delicate creatures can navigate up to 2,000 miles to a single location. Neurobiologists at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) have now found that a key mechanism that helps steer the butterflies to their ultimate destination resides not in the insects' brains, as previously thought, but in their antennae, a surprising discovery that provides an entirely new perspective of the antenna's role in migration.”

For more details go to this link: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/09/090924141736.htm>

The Badger ButterFlyer flits to you every month (every other month in winter).

The next issue will be in DECEMBER.

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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 website 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 karlindot@charter.net

To stop receiving this e-Newsletter simply send an email to the above editor's address.