

Successful Butterfly Conservation Management

compiled and edited

by Ann Swengel

Urban, suburban, and rural; north, south, east, and west: these examples of successful butterfly conservation management comprise a wide range of species, circumstances, and locations. But they all have in common that local butterfly experts studied the butterflies in their area and learned how to cater to their needs. These projects made use of long-term datasets of butterfly observation to identify species in need and to determine the course of conservation management efforts. Through articles, scientific papers, checklists, and/or NABA Butterfly Counts, these experts have shared the results of their efforts to enhance the local butterfly community, with special emphasis on species that are localized or rare in that area.

NEW JERSEY AUDUBON'S CAPE MAY BIRD OBSERVATORY CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The "Model Backyard Habitat" at the Cape May Bird Observatory Center for Research and Education has extensive gardens for butterflies, hummingbirds, hummingbird moths, bees, birds and other wildlife. In addition to the "Caterpillar Food Plant Garden," many caterpillar food plants are incorporated into the other gardens. The gardens are not tidied up in the fall, and this is explained to visitors: that in "cleaning up," next year's butterflies (mostly in immature life stages) would be discarded amongst all the plant stems. Through the winter, visitors observe wintering birds feeding on many of the seed heads left in the garden and learn that

the untidy garden is intentional as a winter bird feeder. The wildflower/grass meadow extends around the property just beyond the "formal" gardens, which aren't formal in the typical sense. The meadow offers a complement of additional caterpillar food plants for an array of skippers and other butterflies. The meadow is mowed once each spring, to allow plant matter to remain as long as possible but not to interfere with the next season's growth. The site has many native trees, shrubs, and vines around the edge of the meadow, as well as others integrated into the gardens, further complementing the gardens' planted host plants. Part of the property is a tidal saltmarsh, explaining the wealth of Aaron's Skippers, Saltmarsh Skippers, Broad-winged Skippers, and even Rare Skippers in the garden, all species that return to the saltmarsh to lay their eggs. Watering is minimal, if at all, to set a good example (only four times during the summer drought of 2001). The dragonfly pond is alive with dragonflies and damselflies, frogs, and nectaring butterflies on the blooming pickerelweed. This site attracts nesting Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins. As Pat Sutton, Program Director, observed early in 2003, "It's been an exciting project, that despite the drought,

Opposite page top: The Cape May Bird Observatory gardens and meadow are attractive to people and to wildlife. Aug. 25, 2001.

Opposite page bottom: A Cloudless Sulphur caterpillar finds one of the partridge peas in the garden to its liking. Oct. 2, 1993.



looked fabulous during those two years [2001 and 2002]. We use no herbicides and pesticides, because this would kill the butterflies we want to increase. We offer weekly butterfly and garden walks, and an opportunity for volunteers to work in the garden (one morning a week, spring to fall) with Karen Williams, owner of Flora for Fauna Nursery and the person who has planted and maintains our gardens for us. Our 'Model Backyard Habitat' is still evolving and is not yet a finished product. We're planting as money and volunteers are available. Our gardens are not the typical picture-perfect garden, but true wildlife gardens—alive with butterflies and their caterpillars, hummingbirds, bees, a variety of ornate wasps, hummingbird moths, praying mantids, ladybugs and more!"

For more information

Cape May Bird Observatory, Center for Research and Education, 600 Route 47 North, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210; phone 609-861-0700; www.njaudubon.org.

To visit: Open DAILY, 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Free / no admittance fee.

Directions from the Philadelphia area: Take Route 95 South to the Commodore Barry Bridge into New Jersey, follow Route 322 to Route 55. Take Route 55 south to Route 47 south to Route 347 south (which rejoins Route 47 just north of Dennisville).



Continue south on Route 47 through Dennisville, past the turn off for Route 83, continue on Route 47 through the traffic light at Route 657 and from here the CMBO Center for Research and Education will be on your left in exactly 1 mile (just around a bend in the road). It is surrounded by a split rail fence; a new building sits beyond a large parking lot.

Directions from the New York City area: Take the Garden State Parkway south to Exit 13 (Swainton). Turn right (west) at the bottom of the exit ramp and continue to Route 9. Turn left (south) onto Route 9 and drive a short ways to Route 646 (Goshen-Swainton Road). Turn right onto Route 646