



Regal Fritillaries: News From the Eastern Front

by Betty Ferster

It's about 8:30 in the morning and my favorite field pants are wet from the knees down from the morning dew. My feet will be wet until I peel my socks off at about three this afternoon. I'm quietly stalking through the tall little-bluestem grass and early goldenrod meadow intently watching for butterflies, or better yet, nectar plants with butterflies occupied at sipping nectar. Just ahead, an image

emerges from the grass, it stretches its wings, and takes off. It is a Regal Fritillary, the creature I stalk. As it flies up-and-off, I swing with my long-handled net, and it takes a turn in mid-air, a brilliant evasive move, and I miss. A few yards ahead Edge Master Dave turns as he hears my screeches of frustration. This is a sound he now knows well. He searches the air between us for the source of my distress,



Fred Habegger (2)

Milkweeds are important nectar sources for Regal Fritillaries at Fort Indiantown Gap. Opposite page: a male nectars at a common milkweed. Above: A female at a butterfly milkweed.