



Atala Chapter News

WINTER/SPRING 2006

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**Do you know this butterfly??
Answer on Page 2**

Message from the President:

Could this Newsletter be the Last? With your help, it won't be.

We are ALL overcommitted. Besides the 40 hours or more that we dedicate to our professions, most of us have extracurricular activities that take up a lot of our spare time: toting kids to practices and lessons, participating in clubs and organizations, etc. Besides my job and butterfly activities, I am also on the board of a local friends group, sing with a community choir and coordinate a yearly scholarship competition. It can all be overwhelming!

Of all my extracurricular activities, I love my participation in this organization most. That has translated over the years into putting an untold number of hours into being a club officer, webmaster, and most time-consuming of all, coordinating and editing this newsletter. It takes approximately two full days to put together the newsletter that you are holding in your hands (or reading on a computer monitor .) I NEED YOUR HELP!!!

How you can help us—If the tasks of creating the newsletter were divided among several people, my job of newsletter editor would take half the time. Please consider taking on one of the following tasks:

Researching Field Trip Locations - We are always looking for new field trip locations but enjoy returning to successful locations as well. You would come up with

ideas for field trips and the dates we could have them, and run them by the officers. Once a decision for the trips has been determined, you would write them up with details including date, time and directions.

Researching Upcoming Speakers – We have 4 meetings a year with speakers. It is always difficult coming up with ideas for new speakers. You would be responsible for helping us come up with ideas for speakers, contacting them with possible dates and writing up the information about them for the newsletter. A bonus would be getting them to write up a brief article for the newsletter about their talk to entice members to come to the meeting.

Ideas for articles – Each newsletter has several articles. There are so many great topics out there and we haven't even scratched the surface! As a group we would brainstorm ideas for articles and you would contact the people who would write those articles. You would also be responsible for getting photos from the authors.

It's great to get ideas from members.....and your ideas are much appreciated. But those ideas have to be researched and written up and that takes time. Won't you help me with one of the tasks above to help our chapter keep providing our members with this newsletter? If you think you'd like to help, please contact me: 561-706-6732 or rickandalana@earthlink.net

WEATHERING WILMA:

HOW THE PEOPLE AND ANIMALS OF THE KEYS FARED ONE OF OUR AREA'S WORST HURRICANES

By Paula Cannon



*A Florida Leafwing, though beaten up,
survives Hurricane Wilma*

Hurricane Wilma, Oct. 24, 2005. Here we go again! Having already been hit by 3 hurricanes this summer, nobody was in the mood to deal with another blow. Everyone was depressed from the last few storms and the damage that they caused, and living like a spider in a cave with all the windows boarded up for months. Another evacuation seemed an impossibility and nobody was about to leave this time, especially since there was not a vacant hotel south of Jacksonville. The weather reports started getting redundant, telling us it was going to hit in a couple days. This went on for almost a week as Wilma had stalled over the Yu-

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WHO AM I?? BUTTERFLY QUIZ

If you guessed that the butterfly on the front was a Fiery Skipper, you're right! If you didn't, read Linda and Buck's descriptions below about how to distinguish these little orange guys.

THOSE CONFUSING ORANGE SKIPPERS IS IT A FIERY OR WHIRLABOUT? by Linda and Buck Cooper

I remember standing in a field when we first started watching butterflies with a field guide in my hand and a puzzled look on my face. There was a small orange skipper with some dark spots on its ventral hindwings – was it a Fiery or a Whirlabout? Would I ever be able to tell the difference between those two? Not possible, I thought. And these were the males! If you are having trouble distinguishing between these two small orange skippers, this article should be of help.

First let's look at how they are similar. Both are small and both have orange males and variable females. Both males have a large stigma on the dorsal forewing with an extra dark patch between the stigma and forewing apex. Both are very common in yards, fields and roadsides. If you have St. Augustine or Bermuda grass in your yard, both of these skippers will be there.



Male Whirlabout, Ventral

Whirlabout, *Polites vibex*, is a small compact grass skipper. It is one of three *Polites* found in this area. Males are usually quite orange and have 'squarish' dark spots on the ventral hindwing.

When males have their

wings open, you can see a very SMOOTH dark border around the entire orange dorsal hindwing. Their dorsal forewing is also orange with a slightly jagged dark border and a dark stigma.



Male Whirlabout, Dorsal



Female Whirlabout, Ventral

Female Whirlabouts are usually quite brownish to olive in color and the 'squarish' dark spots can be very prominent or almost non-existent. When females have their wings open they are very brown with small creamy or pale subapical spots and several creamy or pale spots on the dorsal forewings.

The dorsal hindwings are entirely brown. The males and females can look like different species. Both have the same shape though – very compact. If you see a female skipper you cannot identify – "When in doubt, think Whirlabout!"



Male Fiery, Ventral

Fiery Skipper, *Hylephila phyleus*, is the only member of its South American genus found in North America. Males are usually quite orange with a scattering of small 'pepper' spots on the ventral hindwing. When males have their wings open,

you can see a jagged dark border around the bottom of the orange dorsal hindwing – sort of like orange 'flames' intruding into the dark border. The flames are even more prominent on the dorsal forewing, intruding deeply into the border. They too have a large stigma.



Male Fiery, Dorsal



Female Fiery, Dorsal

Females are usually a paler orange than males with olive overtones on the ventral hindwing. Females have a diffused pattern on their ventral hindwings and the 'pepper' spots are scattered over the pattern, sometimes looking like female Sachems because of this pattern. When females open their

wings they have a very 'busy' pattern on the dorsal forewing but have no translucent spots such as female Sachems have. Their dorsal hindwings are mostly brown with elongated orange bars. Several field guides mention that Fiery Skippers have short antennae but that is something we have never keyed in on. Fiery Skippers have a more upright forewing than Whirlabout and appear more 'streamlined' in shape than the compact Whirlabout.

You can only read butterfly descriptions for so long without getting blurry-eyed. Try your skills on this mating pair of small skippers (photo right). Now grab those binoculars and get out in your yard and identify those small orange skippers. The more practice you have the better your identification skills become and the more confident you become. Have fun.



Mating Fiery Skippers.
The female is on the right

All photos in the article taken by Linda Cooper. To print this in color, go to: <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabaac/winspr2006.pdf>



Upcoming Field Trips—2006

DON'T FORGET YOUR FIELD GUIDE AND BINOCULARS!!

Please verify all directions on a map before you leave home. I make mistakes!

Sunday, February 26 - Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge and Local Natural Area. We will meet in the butterfly garden at Loxahatchee at 9:00am and spend about 1-2 hours here. Then we will caravan over to another location nearby. **Directions:** *The refuge is located about a mile south of Boynton Beach Blvd. on 441. The entrance is on the west side of 411. \$5.00 per car to enter. For more detailed directions: <http://loxahatchee.fws.gov/Visitor/directions.asp>*

Sunday, March 26 - Savannas Preserve State Park We will meet with a naturalist at the Education Center at 9:30am. **Directions:** *I-95 towards Stuart. Take exit 101 (Hwy 76/Kanner Hwy). Continue about 6 miles to US 1 North. Stay on US 1 about 8 miles. Turn right onto SE Walton Rd. The Environmental Education Center is located approximately 2 miles east of US 1 on Walton Road in Port St. Lucie.*

Easter Sunday! April 16 - Jonathan Dickinson State Park Field trip and Potluck Lunch. Why schedule a field trip on Easter Sunday. Well, the Dusted Skipper doesn't realize that it is a holiday but it is the best time to see this rare skipper. Members from the Miami Blue Chapter will be joining us. Contact Alana at rickandalana@earthlink.net if you'd like to bring a dish for the potluck lunch. We will meet at the front entrance at 9:00am. There is a small entrance fee. **Directions:** *Take I-95 north to Exit 87A - go east on Indiantown Road to US 1. Turn left (north) on US 1. Jonathan Dickinson is 5 miles on your left.*

Sunday, May 21 - Field trip to Riverbend Park. We will meet under the Chiksee at 9:00am for a tour of the new trails at Riverbend. Don't miss this opportunity. The park is still closed to the public. You can only enter with a private group!

Directions: *Take I-95 north to Indiantown Road. Head west about 1/2 mile. You will see a brown sign for the park (and also a sign for Canoe Outfitters) on the south side.*

Butterfly Count – Mark your Calendars! We need your help!

Central Circle will be conducted on **June 24th.**

North Circle will be conducted on **July 1st.**

South Circle will be conducted on **July 2nd.**

Sunday, July 9- Highlands Hammock Butterfly Count – A chance to see numerous species of swallowtail and always the Little Metalmark. Make sure you bring bug repellent and shoes you don't mind getting wet! Also, bring picnic lunch. We will meet at the entrance at 9:00am.

Directions: *Take I-95 to Blue Heron. Go West to the Beeline (710). The Beeline through Indiantown to SR70. Go West on SR70 through Okeechobee to SR98. Go North on SR98 to SR27. Go North on SR27 into Sebring. Take a left onto Highlands Hammock Rd. (also called 634. Landmarks: traffic signal and Bar-B-Que restaurant). We will meet at the Ranger Station at **9:00am.** ~2 1/2 hours from WPB.*

Saturday, July 15 - Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park Butterfly Count— Kissimmee Prairie has the highest diversity of butterflies in the state of Florida. We will meet at the entrance at **9:00am.** **Directions:** *Take I-95 to Blue Heron. Go west to SR 710 (Bee Line Highway). Take SR 710 to Okeechobee which is approximately 70 miles. At Highway 70, turn left (west) and continue through the city of Okeechobee Turn right onto Hwy.98 and continue about 15 minutes. Turn right (north) on SR 700 and continue for another 15 minutes. Bring a picnic lunch. Plan for ~2 hours to get to the park.*

Sunday, July 16—Sue Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Butterfly Count. **Directions:** *Take I-95 to Blue Heron. Go west to SR 710 (Bee Line Highway). Take SR 710 to Okeechobee which is approximately 70 miles. At Highway 70, turn left (west) and continue through the city of Okeechobee. Turn right onto 441 (Parrot Ave.) and continue north about 10 minutes. Take a left onto NW 144th Street and go about 2 1/2 miles. Take a left on NW 30th Terrace. You will see a sign here for Arnold's. Continue to the end of the road. We will meet at 9:00 by the butterfly garden.*

Special Events

Mounts Plant Sale — Sat, April 29 9-5 and Sunday April 30 9-4. Call 561/233-1757 for more information.

Naturescaping: An Earth Day Event at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park on Singer Island (North Palm Beach). —Saturday, April 15, 2006, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Call 561/624-6950 for more information. Native plants for sale. Lots of exhibitors, wildlife programs, and educational speakers on the Real Florida. Alana Edwards will be giving a butterfly presentation. Atala Chapter will be selling native butterfly plants. We need volunteers! Call Jan (793-6131) or Teri(848-4930).

DuPuis Management Area's Earth Day—Saturday, April 22, 2006. 10 a.m.—2 p.m. Presentations, activities for kids, bus tour and more! Call (561) 686-8800, ext. 3339.

North American Butterfly Association-7th Biennial Members' Meeting—Plan to join fellow NABA members from points near and far at the seventh Biennial NABA Members' Meeting, to be held June 1-4, 2006 at the Best Western Sovereign Hotel and Conference Center, West Springfield, Massachusetts. Beginners are welcome. Go to: <http://www.naba.org/meeting.html> for more info.

Upcoming Meetings

Meetings are held at Pine Jog Environmental Education Center in West Palm Beach. Take I-95 to West Palm Beach (Forest Hill exit.) Turn West on Forest Hill Blvd. & go to Jog road. Go North on Jog Rd. to Summit Blvd. Turn East on Summit Blvd. Look for the Pine Jog entrance on the North side of Summit Blvd. **Meetings begin at 7 p.m.**

Monday, January 30, 2006—Butterflies, Botany and Battlefields. Sandy Koi of University of Florida Entomology/Nematology Department in Davie will present this PowerPoint presentation about the threatened tropical butterfly, the Atala, its cycad host plant, known locally as “coontie,” and how the history of South Florida influenced and was influenced by both. Don't miss this presentation on our chapter's namesake!!



Monday, May 15, 2006—The History of Riverbend Park. Riverbend Park is a jewel tucked away in the western part of Jupiter. It has a rich history being the site of a battle of the Loxahatchee between the Seminole Indians and U. S. soldiers and took place on Jan. 24, 1838. It also holds major ecological importance to the Loxahatchee River's environmental health. John Wildner, a director at the park, will speak about the history of this sight and what the future holds. He will lead a field trip the following Sunday.

Monday, June 19, 2005—At this meeting we will prepare for the 4th of July Butterfly Count. We encourage you to attend this meeting even if you don't plan to count at one of the public sites as there will be an ID Slide show at the end of the meeting.

(Weathering Wilma—continued from page 1)



Rising water levels at Paula's House taken from her neighbor's stilt house

catan. Everyone was growing weary in the wait, wishing it would just come and be over with already.

Finally, this evil looking cyclone started moving and, while gaining strength, it was making its way toward south Florida. It seemed a good idea to stay put rather than evacuate. Getting stuck in this thing's path would have been worse than riding it out here, especially with no place to stay. I made all my hurricane preparations Sunday evening, and while I was out there taking the last pictures of my garden, I saw the most beautiful Monarch flying around. My first thought was to try and catch it so I could bring it inside for safety. These storms make you do crazy, irrational things you normally wouldn't think of! Unable to catch her, I felt really bad for her being left outside, getting torn apart like a piece of wet tissue.

I went to bed early, knowing that by 1:00 am I would be awakened by the high winds. I kept getting up to check the water level outside. The winds were blowing hard but the water was very low in the canal, which seemed odd since it should have been getting close to high tide. By 3:00 am, I found myself holding onto the front door knob, pulling in with everything I had as the wind and pressure were pulling the door out like some strange tug of war game. The door was boarded with two 2x4's and still it felt as though it was breathing and about to burst open. By daybreak things had calmed down enough to walk outside. The wind was still quite high but not sustained. As I stood out on the deck, talking across the canal with the neighbors, we all shared a sigh of relief that the winds were not as bad as Georges of '98, and we all still had a roof over our heads. Another friend drove over to check on me since I was alone for this one. As we were talking, I noticed the water seemed to be a lot

higher all of a sudden. I pointed this out to my friend and we picked out a crack on the seawall for reference. As we watched it, the water started to come right up and over it. It was rising about an inch every couple minutes or so. My friend ran to his truck and raced home to get his vehicle up on higher ground. My neighbor yelled over to me that the water on the north end of the island in Port Pine Heights was already 6 feet deep and it was coming our way! My heart stopped for a minute, but I grabbed the camera and ran out to the street.

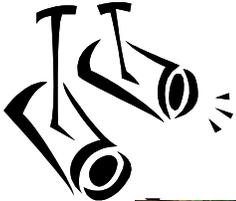
I looked to the north and I could see the water coming fast up the street and turning the corner from the west. Before I could turn around, the water was coming over onto the street and my feet were wet. Birds that normally feed in my yard in the morning were flying about in a flurry of panic, with the winds too gusty for them to fly or perch.

There was nothing but water where the ground should have been; the birds appeared completely exhausted. In the house, I managed to get most things up off the floor (some things extremely heavy!), placing them high up. I later wondered how I did that, as I had great difficulty later getting them down. Adrenalin makes you super woman!

By this time, the water was almost crotch high out in the street so I decided that I'd better go to the neighbors stilt house while I was still able to walk there. My ground level house looked so vulnerable from the neighbor's house. All you could see was water everywhere. You couldn't tell the canal from the yard. Boats that were not tied off on both sides of the canal were floating up out of the canal onto what used to be land. The water came up all



Paula shows the water line on Sugarloaf Key. She is 5'10"!



MEMBER
HIGHLIGHT

Spotlight on Debbie Dixon & Mike Kanyuh



Debbie says: I don't remember not being interested in many aspects of nature. I was absorbed with SCUBA diving

for some years, blended with horses, a couple Florida Master Naturalist Courses (I was thrilled when Steve Bass asked me to lead butterfly field trips at Gumbo Limbo. Who Me!?)

It was somewhere between Horse Shows with my 2 year old mare (she's 24 now!) and Nature Conservancy Field trips with my mom, that my girlfriend and I joined in a Butterfly Field Trip at Blowing Rocks Nature Preserve led by Teri Jabour. It looked a bit odd to us at first to see a group of people running and shouting, "It's a Buckeye!" But, I was hooked, even though as I recall I never did see that Buckeye. (Girlfriend, Paula Russo, was one of the people that started the Broward NABA chapter.)

Mike says: In 1999 I did not know what a butterfly was. Then I met Debbie Dixon, a walking, talking butterfly enthusiast. (Debbie- I remember now, our first date Mike brought me a butterfly candle---no wonder he won my heart!)

Now that I have married her **WE** are walking, talking butterfly enthusiasts.

Debbie says: Mike and I find that butterflying with others that are walking talking educating butterfly enthusiasts all the more rewarding.

(Weathering Wilma—continued from page 4)

the way to my back door and as I tried to swallow the huge lump in my throat, my neighbor said, "I think it stopped." Oh, those beautiful four words! Yes, indeed. It had stopped, within inches of flooding my entire house! But I was still feeling concerned for the people on the north side who were not to be so lucky.

Shortly after the water was at its peak, it quickly started to pull out. It had more force than before, sucking everything not tied down out to sea like a giant toilet had been flushed! We watched huge stacks of wood pallets, 55 gallon drums of oil, picnic tables and anything else that was not tied down just floated away, as if it were all made of styrofoam! Key deer were trying to swim to safety. I later did find a few that had apparently drowned out on the flats. Even the big freshwater hole known as Blue Hole was flooded with salt water and overflowed, killing all the animals. Even the alligators and turtles perished. I have since found dead mud turtles, box turtles, various fish, and many snails, insects and birds. Right after the water receded, I noticed strange brown rings on my trees and shrubs. On closer inspection, I found hundreds of roaches, all packed on top of one another like a ring of brown scales right at the water line. I found this to be quite remarkable. Especially since it was all roaches, many species of them, and no other bugs.

For weeks after the storm we were finding all sorts of animals displaced and in bad shape. Almost every fresh water hole was replaced with salt, leaving the animals severely dehydrated. I found an alligator up the road in bad shape and I took him to a rescue center where he recovered in a kiddie pool. One of the Red Bellied Slider water turtles from Blue Hole was in the middle of my road three weeks after Wilma, barely alive. I took him home and he is now healthy and doing very well in my pond.

Since the storm, I have been monitoring the pinelands and my

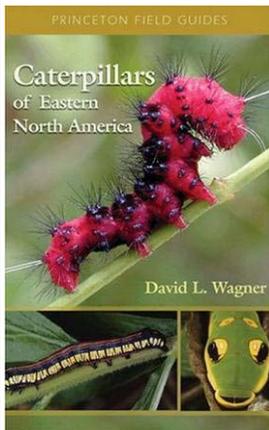
findings so far are significant. I believe the hardest hit pinelands in the lower keys are on Sugarloaf and Cudjoe where the water was a good 8 feet high. The seaweed line up in the buttonwood is still clearly visible over two months later. Most of these pines are already dead and I don't expect we will know the full extent of the loss for several years. As we learned after Georges, pines continued to die many years after the storm. These islands have not seen a storm surge of this magnitude in recent history. This along with the already challenging environment in which the flora must live (bare rock instead of any real soil layer, very little rainfall, harsh salty conditions, prescribed burning), it is no wonder the pinelands are severely stressed. Most of the pines on the north and south end of Key Deer Blvd. are dead or dying. My photographs taken right after the storm compared to those taken a month later show continued decline, and are dramatic.

But even with all the death and devastation, there is also new life regenerating. Some trees and plants are showing signs of new growth and there are flowers for the butterflies again. I have had many Monarchs this year. They are even feeding on my hummingbird feeder, which they were not doing right after the storm. There are still Miami Blues at Bahia Honda. However, I have not seen one Zebra since Wilma. Oh, and about that Monarch that I tried to rescue before the storm? Well, the first thing I saw the morning after Wilma when I first opened my door was that beautiful butterfly! She circled around my head twice and landed in front of me. Not showing the slightest sign of stress and just as perfect as the night before. That moment I realized that life goes on and we'd all be OK.

Editor's Note: Paula Cannon is an active butterfly watcher, photographer and a resident on Big Pine Key.

Books of Interest

with commentary from Barnes & Noble



Caterpillars of Eastern North America

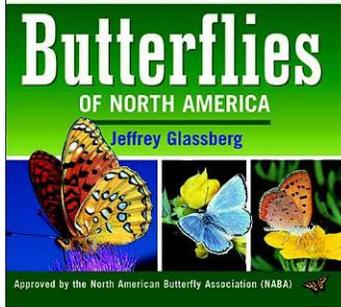
by David L. Wagner

This illustrated guide will enable you to identify the caterpillars of nearly 700 butterflies and moths found east of the Mississippi.

The more than 1,200 color photographs and two dozen line drawings include numerous images. Full-page species accounts cover almost 400 species,

with up to six images per species including an image of the adult plus succinct text with information on distribution, seasonal activity, foodplants, and life history. These accounts are complemented with additional images of earlier instars, closely related species, noteworthy behaviors, and other intriguing aspects of caterpillar biology.

Released July 2005.



Butterflies of North America

By Jeffrey Glassberg

Swallowtails and sulphurs; gossamer wings and metalmarks; skippers and pine whites: If you love butterflies, this bounteous illustrated paperback will take your breath away. In a unique format designed for both beginning and advanced lepidopterists, and highlighted with magnificent color photographs of hundreds of these lovely creatures—including numerous oversized photographs for easy identification—*Butterflies of North America* is a

handy guide to identifying nearly every species of North American butterfly. The introduction includes vital information about butterfly behavior and biology, close-range binoculars and cameras, and the benefits of butterfly conservation. The main body of the book, the Species Guide, contains fascinating details about thousands of butterflies, including such distinguishing features as forewing length, what they eat, their range, and unique behavioral characteristics.

With more than 250 gorgeous full-color photographs and definitive information about thousands of different butterflies, Dr. Glassberg's *Butterflies of North America* is an essential and easy-to-use resource for all butterfly lovers. Released November 2005.



ATALA CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION

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Send your email address to
atala@prodigy.net for updates on
butterfly related topics and events
throughout the year!

We're on the WEB!

<http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabaac/index.html>