

Badger ButterFlyer

The e-Newsletter of the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association **AUGUST, 2011**

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

1 NEXT FIELD TRIPS

Our field trips are **free** and open to the public.

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Saturday, August 13:

Butterflies of the Avoca/Blue River Area

This trip will highlight several areas in the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway, including Avoca Prairie and Savanna State Natural Area in Iowa County, Blue River unit in Grant County and along the Wisconsin River north of Blue River. **Leader will be Mike Reese. We expect to see late butterflies and several southern immigrants.** A hat and long pants are recommended. Bring a lunch and binoculars (the closer they focus the better). A few extra binoculars are available. This is a joint trip of SWBA and the Madison Audubon Society.

Meet at 10:30 a.m. The trip may last until 4 p.m. Allow 50 minute travel time from Middleton. Take Hwy 14 west to Lone Rock, south on Hwy 130 then turn right on Hwy 133. Go west about 5.0 miles, turn right on Hay Rd, and drive north to the parking lot just before the creek. Call Mike at (920) 787-2341 if you have a question about the trip.

Saturday, August 27: Butterflies and Blossoms at Pheasant Branch

Join us on a walk through the lovely Pheasant Branch Conservancy in Middleton. The many beautiful asters should be in bloom, and we hope lots of butterflies will be nectaring on these flowers. We can expect several species, including Monarchs, sulfurs, blues, and possibly some southern immigrants, such as Common Buckeye and Painted Lady. You never know what you may find! We will also learn more about restoration efforts at the conservancy. Long pants, a hat, water, and sturdy hiking shoes are recommended. Close-focusing binoculars are also useful. (We will have a few extra binoculars.) We will hike two or three miles. Leader is Dreux Watermolen. Co-sponsors with SWBA are Friends of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, the Madison Audubon Society and Wisconsin Wetlands Association. Contact the trip leader only if you have a question about the trip: Dreux Watermolen: (608) 266-8931, dreux.watermolen@Wisconsin.gov

Meet in Middleton at 10:00 a.m. The trip will last about 2 hours. Directions: At the west end of Lake Mendota take Allen Boulevard north, then turn left on Century Avenue (Co. M). Track your mileage as you turn right onto Old Creek Road and then right on Pheasant Branch Road going north 1.2 miles to the small county parking lot on the right, at the beginning of the gated road.

Saturday, September 3: Grasshoppers!!

Our leader, Kathy Kirk, co-authored A Guide to the Grasshoppers of Wisconsin published by Wisconsin DNR. The book exhibited the state's grasshopper species with color photos, range maps, and species accounts. Our appreciation of grasshoppers will take a big leap forward as Kathy leads this trip into sand prairie areas in search of these fascinating and beautiful insects. We will spend 2-3 hours learning how to discern grasshoppers from katydids, and learn about behavior, ecology, life history, and the biology needed for identification. We will net-and-release the various species for observation and discussion.

Attendees that have aerial nets and minnow nets are encouraged to bring them to have fun chasing grasshoppers. Also bring close-focusing binoculars if you have them. This is a joint trip of SWBA and the Madison Audubon Society.

Meet at 1:30 p.m. at the parking lot of the Mazomanie Sand Barrens. From Middleton take Highway 12 toward Sauk City. At the intersection with Y turn left (west) onto Y and go nearly 1.7 miles. Turn left on the short road to the parking lot. Call Kathy at (608) 442-1642 only if you have a question about the trip.

2 HIGHLIGHTS OF PRETTY THINGS WITH WINGS FIELD TRIP

The Pretty Things with Wings field trip, held on July 17, observed birds, butterflies and dragonflies with close-focusing binoculars. Leader Edgar Spalding conducted the tour of Lakeshore Preserve. Glenda Denniston photographed a Striped Hairstreak which is beautiful -- and scarce -- and always a good find!



Bird and butterfly watching at Biocore Prairie.



Striped Hairstreak

3 UPDATE ON MONARCHS

BAD NEWS: Scientists verify that Monarchs have had a prolonged decline.

An article in Science News stated “While monarch numbers have fluttered up and down over recent decades, one research group now says that there’s enough data to spot a downward trend.” In the past 17 years, since the discovery of the Monarch overwintering site, the amount of space they occupy at the overwintering site has been declining. There is now enough data to show statistical significance, which verifies a real decline in the Monarch population.

Factors that contribute to the decline are listed as illegal logging, which reduces the forest the Monarchs are dependent on, increasingly severe weather due to global warming, reduction of breeding habitat as open land with milkweeds becomes developed, and “researchers warn that a boom in genetically engineered crops is changing herbicide-use patterns and thinning the ranks of milkweeds.”

GOOD NEWS: Problems in Mexico have gotten better.

In an article by the Associated Press on July 21, it was stated that the problem of illegal logging at the Monarch overwintering site in Central Mexico has improved. Illegal logging in winter has dropped to about 1/3 its previous level. “Mexican federal and state police forces have also cracked down on illegal logging in the 13,550-hectare (33,482-acre) reserve and in a larger buffer zone around the park where logging is also prohibited.” Read the full article at <http://bit.ly/raphBD>



BAD NEWS: Drought in Texas

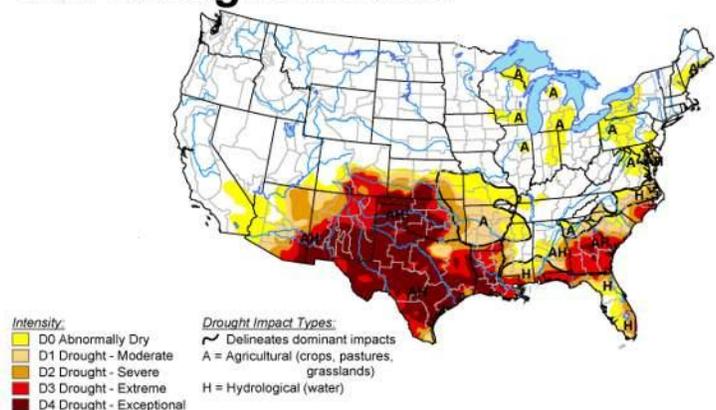
Last winter Dorothy and I spent some weeks in Texas. I was delighted especially by the constant sunny skies and frequently remarked that “the skies are not cloudy all day.” It made the temperatures in the 60’s quite comfortable. But after many days it finally dawned on me that the sunny days were due to a lack of rain -- Texas was actually in the early stages of drought.

A record-breaking stretch of very hot weather is keeping Texas in the grips of severe drought. The 10 months from October 2010 through July 2011 have been the driest for that 10-month period in Texas since 1895, when the state began keeping rainfall records.

With the lack of rain this spring, temperatures heated up to record levels in June and July. Statewide, the months of June and July were the hottest such months on record. The persistent hot and dry pattern has produced numerous 100-degree days. As of August 5, Austin already recorded 52, 100-degree days this summer.

U.S. Drought Monitor

July 26, 2011

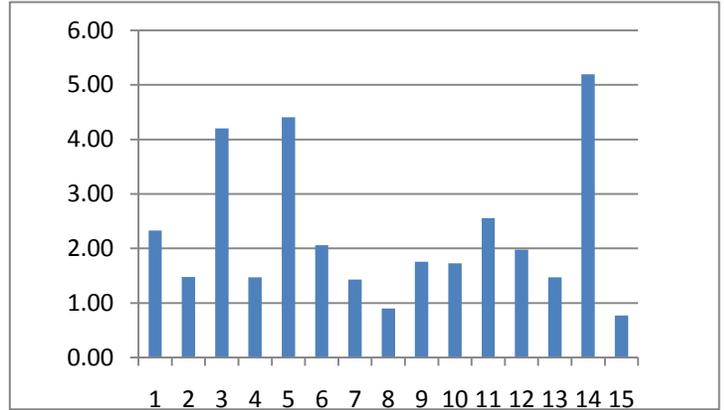


U.S. Department of Agriculture

The significance for Monarchs is that this spring they began their northward migration by passing through Texas where Milkweeds were in poor condition for Monarch reproduction. Monarchs got off to a poor start this year. So how are they doing now here in Wisconsin?

BAD NEWS: Wisconsin Monarch populations in first half of July are low.

We have conducted NABA butterfly surveys each summer for many years and have compiled the results of 6 all-day surveys in the southern 1/2 of Wisconsin for the first half of July. The number of Monarchs per hour of surveying is plotted for the past 15 years. You may recall that last summer Monarchs made a good start on their recovery which doubled their wintering population in Mexico. We found in last summer's surveys that Monarchs were at the highest density in Wisconsin in 22 years of surveying. But they needed to continue to make such gains to overcome their historically low population.



But as you can see from the data, the drought in Texas has so reduced the numbers of Monarchs, that in Wisconsin, they are at the lowest density of the past 15 years. And worse, this seriously reduced population will have to pass through Texas again, this fall, on the way back to central Mexico! Will the drought end? We will have to await the count of the Monarch population in central Mexico this winter to find out what effect all these things will have on Monarchs.

4 BUTTERFLIES REPORTED IN JULY TO www.wisconsinbutterflies.org

COMMON BUTTERFLIES: Several species have been present in high numbers this year. **Least Skippers** (our smallest butterfly) are usually seen in small numbers, but at the beginning of July, 196 were found on the Madison NABA count. **Pearl or Northern Crescents** have been quite common throughout the year. **Little Wood Satyrs** (in June) and **Common Wood Nymphs** were also rather abundant. In July we have had excellent numbers of **Eastern Tiger Swallowtails**, so many that we often see more than one individual at a time and so get to observe interaction between them, such as courting. **Giant Swallowtails** were a major disappointment last year because 2010 was a very good butterfly year, yet few Giants were seen. But this month they are now being regularly encountered. We have been lucky that so many **Common Buckeye's** are being seen; in some years it is uncommon. It's a gorgeous butterfly!



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

VERY RARE STRAYS: The **Marine Blue**, a stray from the southwestern U.S., was seen only twice in the 38 years preceding 2008. Then 3 were seen in 2008 and 2 more so far in 2011. The Marine Blue was seen on July 13 in Milwaukee Co. and on July 25 in Platteville.

The **Pipevine Swallowtail** was not reported in Wisconsin during the 31 years from 1969 to 2000. Then in 2001 Pipevine Swallowtails were noticed in Madison. In 2007 there were several reports and then one was noted in Iowa Co. in 2010. They have reappeared this year: On July 21 a Pipevine Swallowtail was found in a butterfly garden in Madison. Then from July 25 to 30 there were reports of 2 Pipevine Swallowtails at Olbrich Gardens, which has good stands of the caterpillar food plant, Pipevine.

OTHER GOOD SIGHTINGS: The usually rare **Green Comma** had another great season. Like last year, observers were seeing them in numbers in the north. The highest was 26 seen on a NABA count in Bayfield Co. on July 29. The scarce **Greenish Blue** had 3 reports in the first 3 days of July. **Bog Coppers** were seen in the north with up to 25 seen in Wood Co. Only one **Gray Copper** was found in July, on the Trempealeau NABA count. There were a few reports of **Purplish Copper**, but several reports of the scarce **Variegated Fritillary**. Four were seen on July 8 at Shea Prairie in Iowa Co. Only a single stray **Gray Hairstreak** has been reported (July 29 Monroe Co.). **Broad-winged Skippers** were plentiful (40) at Horicon on July 24. The seriously

declining **Ottoo Skipper** was still found (9) at Rush Creek S.N.A. on July 23. At the end of the month a few **Fiery Skippers** began to show up. They are late summer immigrants from the south and should continue to be reported in August. **Sachem** is also an immigrant and appeared on July 30 in Madison in a butterfly garden. **Wild Indigo Duskywing** was reported only from southern Wisconsin. It is more common since it adapted to Crown Vetch, common along roadsides. Only 2 reports of **American Snout**, with 5 seen on July 25 at Hardscrabble S.N.A. The beautiful **Compton Tortoiseshell** is more common in the north. An incredible 270 were counted in Florence Co. on July 20! Also in very high numbers in the north were **Aphrodite Fritillaries** with 288 counted on a NABA count in Bayfield Co. on July 29!



Compton Tortoiseshell

WHAT WILL BE FLYING IN AUGUST?

Monarchs will be increasing until they leave for Mexico in early September. The Swallowtails will be winding down by September. The scarce Leonard’s Skipper will begin flying in August! There will be the chance of finding a rare stray from the south throughout August and into September.

Keep sending your sightings to Mike Reese’s outstanding, award-winning, web site:

www.wisconsinbutterflies.org

The database this builds up is crucial to our understanding of Wisconsin butterflies! You can also submit a photo to the site, and see what butterflies are being seen around the state, and enjoy the photos that others are taking, as the butterfly season unfolds. **TRY IT!**

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

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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

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