

# Badger Butterfly

The e-Newsletter of the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association **AUGUST, 2012**

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

## 1 NEXT FIELD TRIPS

Mark your calendars!

### Saturday, August 11: 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, and Blue River unit in Grant County. Leader will be



Little Yellow

**Mike Reese.** We expect to see **late butterflies and several unusual 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 the Southern Wis.

Butterfly Association and Madison Audubon Society.

Meet at 10:30 a.m.

The trip may last until 4 p.m. Allow 50 minute travel

time from Middleton. **DIRECTIONS:** 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 Lane, and drive north to the parking lot just before the creek. Call Mike at (920) 787-2341 only if you have a question about the trip.

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

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2. **Highlights of 3 Recent Field Trips.**
3. **Drought and Butterflies of July.**
4. **How Are Monarchs Doing?**
5. **New NABA Project: Photodocumentation of Caterpillar Foodplants.**
6. **Last Chance for NABA Meeting in Arizona!**

### Saturday, August 25: 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, Black Swallowtail, 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 about two miles. Leader is Dreux Watermolen. Co-sponsors are Friends of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy,



Black Swallowtail

Southern Wis. Butterfly Association, Wisconsin Wetlands Association and Madison Audubon Society.

Contact the trip leader only if you have a question about the trip: Dreux Watermolen: (608) 266-8931, or email [dreux.watermolen@Wisconsin.gov](mailto: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.

## 2 HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT FIELD TRIPS

### Highlights of Butterflies of Sandhill Wildlife Area (Wood Co.)



This was another spectacular butterfly day! 10 participants found the butterflies abundant at this huge wildlife area in central Wisconsin. We found 40 species! Many of these were scarce or non-existent in the southern part of the state. We had



Acadian Hairstreak



Fiery Skipper  
Photo by Ron Arnold.

great looks at the beautiful **Pink-edged Sulphur** and the rare **Two-spotted Skipper**. The scarce **Bog Copper** was seen as well as the Federally Endangered **Karner Blue**. And a number of immigrants from the south turned up even in central Wisconsin! Our thanks to leader **Ron Arnold!** Here is the complete list. Immigrants are indicated by a \*. The best sightings are marked in **bold type**:



Bog Copper

Black Swallowtail 1  
Clouded Sulphur 2  
\*Orange Sulphur 5  
**Pink-edged Sulphur 2**  
**\*Little Yellow 3**  
**\*Dainty Sulphur 1**  
American Copper 4  
Bronze Copper 1  
**Bog Copper 2**  
Coral Hairstreak 1  
**Acadian Hairstreak 12**  
Edwards' Hairstreak 1  
Eastern Tailed-Blue 4

Summer Azure 1  
**Karner Blue 20**  
**\*Variegated Fritillary 1**  
Great Spangled Fritillary 1  
**Aphrodite Fritillary 10**  
**Silver-bordered Fritillary 4**  
Northern Crescent 4  
**Gray Comma 1**  
Mourning Cloak 1  
\*Red Admiral 2  
**\*Common Buckeye 8**  
**White Admiral 1**  
Red-spotted Purple 1

Viceroy 2  
Northern Pearly-eye 2  
Eyed Brown 8  
**Appalachian Brown 1**  
Common Wood-Nymph 3  
\*Monarch 2  
Least Skipper 3  
**\*Fiery Skipper 4**  
**Mulberry Wing 10**  
**Broad-winged Skipper 20**  
**Dion Skipper 10**  
Black Dash 30  
**Two-spotted Skipper 3**  
Dun Skipper 30

### Highlights of Pretty Things with Wings

About a dozen people showed up despite the heat (in the afternoon the high was 95°!) We saw various interesting butterflies. There were lots of **Fiery Skippers**, both the **American Lady** and the **Painted Lady**, for a good teaching moment on how to recognize the difference. Two **Variegated Fritillaries**, and at least four **Buckeyes**, were seen. In most other years the Buckeyes would probably be the most unusual, but this year the Variegated Frits are a good find. People got good looks at **Eastern Amberwings** (a tiny dragonfly). It is always exciting for people to notice them for the first time!



Eastern Amberwing

Swallows were already gathering: Barn, Tree, Rough-winged, and Cliff were seen flying around in large flocks. It was hard to explain to people how summer was



Variegated Fritillary

already over in some ways -- when it was so hot!! Our thanks to leader **Edgar Spalding!**

## Highlights of Flowers, Butterflies and Birds of Schurch-Thomson (by Dr. Douglas Buege)

Seventeen people met to tour the prairies south of Cave of the Mounds on an overcast Saturday morning. Rich Henderson showed all apparent damage from the drought. Butterflies were focusing on lower areas in the hilly prairie, where more flowers provided nectar. **Regal Fritillaries** and a **cicada killer** were seen!

Thanks to Dan Sonnenberg for keeping track of butterfly species seen, and Sylvia Edlebeck for the photos. Rich believes that the immigrant **Gray Hairstreak** is a new sighting for the prairie. [Editor's note: A BIG thanks to the co-leaders **Rich Henderson and Dr. Douglas Buege!**]



**Gray Hairstreak**  
Photo by Sylvia Edlebeck

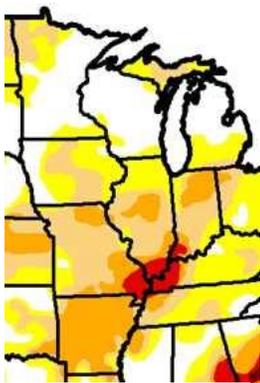
**Regal Fritillary**  
Photo by Sylvia Edlebeck

Black Swallowtail 1  
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 1  
Clouded Sulphur 7  
Orange Sulphur 3  
**Gray Hairstreak 1**  
Eastern Tailed-Blue 30

Great Spangled Fritillary 8  
**Aphrodite Fritillary 1**  
**Regal Fritillary 12**  
Meadow Fritillary 10  
Pearl Crescent 6  
Red Admiral 2

**Common Buckeye 4**  
Common Wood-Nymph 8  
Monarch 4  
Silver-spotted Skipper 6  
Dun Skipper 3

## 3 BUTTERFLIES REPORTED IN JULY TO [www.wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org)

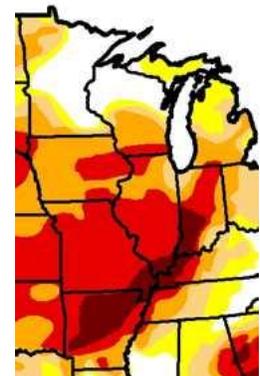


June 19

**Severe Drought  
Continues in Wisconsin**  
(Source: U. S. Drought Monitor)



July 24



July 31

What an extraordinary year this has been! Record warmth in March got the butterfly season off to a roaring start and 2012 appeared to be the best ever year for immigrant butterflies. (Immigrants are butterflies that cannot survive our winter but travel into Wisconsin from the south usually in small numbers. Most of them will breed here.) The promise has been fulfilled, with frequent reports, all spring and summer, of sightings of these usually scarce butterflies.

### Effect of Drought on Butterflies.

Hot weather normally tends to stimulate butterfly populations by stimulating growth of the caterpillar food plants and nectar sources, provided there is also ample rainfall. (That happened in 2011, which saw ideal conditions for butterflies.) But in the

Unfortunately, the promising spring has been followed by extreme record heat in June and July, with little rain, producing severe drought in southern Wisconsin. Conditions are worse in Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas.

The March warm spell remains the most extreme temperature event of the year. Temperatures reached 38° above the average high. (If that had occurred in July, the temperature would have had to reach 120°!)

summer of 2012 we've had plenty of the hot weather, but the rainfall has been absent. Consequently, butterflies have suffered a noticeable reduction in population, due to the drought. Drought has damaged both the caterpillar food

plants and nectar plants. There have been dozens of comments sent to [www.wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org) about the deterioration of the butterfly season. Here is a small sample:

"Very dry, with few nectar sources" "The butterflies seem fewer and smaller than last year; is it because of the drought? The ground is cracked, the ponds drying up." "The liatris is undersized and not nearly as widespread as in other years." "Very few butterflies." (There were very few such negative observations for July of last year, when we had both hot weather and ample rainfall.) To try to check out the persistent impression of lower numbers of butterflies, I looked at the results of 6 all-day NABA butterfly counts conducted in

the southern half of Wisconsin between June 25 and July 16. These counts have been conducted for decades so they can provide a clearer picture than does our memory of last year's butterflies. All 6 counts showed below average density of butterflies. The values ranged from 85% of normal butterfly density down to only 41% of normal density. The average for the 6 counts was 69% of normal density. Thus the impression of lower butterfly numbers was correct and could be documented and quantified by the NABA counts. Nevertheless, all these counts also had reasonably good species diversity and also continued to have record numbers of *immigrant* species.

### Immigrants Continued to Invade the State in July.

Another three immigrant species appeared in the state during July and fills out the list at right. These were rarities seldom seen in Wisconsin: **Reakirt's Blue**, **Southern Dogface** and the new state record, **Brazilian Skipper**. (Most of the butterflies on this list have continued to be seen throughout July.)

### Butterflies in Northern Wisconsin

The northern half of the state had normal levels of rainfall, or above normal! It was from the northern counties that there were reports of plentiful butterflies (sometimes "hundreds"! ) as the north enjoyed warm weather, ample rainfall, and the influx of immigrants that reached even the northern-most counties.

### What is the Prospect for Immigrants in the Rest of Summer and Fall?

It will be interesting to see if any more unusual rarities come into the state in the next two months. On the one hand, immigrants have moved northward, into Illinois. But, on the other hand, those areas are in even worse drought than we are! So the butterfly populations to the south must be seriously reduced. But on yet a third hand(!) butterflies tend to migrate away from drought areas -- which could head them in our direction--assuming there are enough southerly winds and nectar sources to get them here! So stay tuned to [wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://wisconsinbutterflies.org) (and the Badger ButterFlyer!)

MIGRANTS FROM THE SOUTH		
SPECIES	FIRST SIGHTING	
	2012	2010
Red Admiral	March 21	April 15
Painted Lady	April 4	May 1
Common Buckeye	April 12	June 19
Orange Sulphur	April 14	May 2
Giant Swallowtail	April 24	May 1
Monarch	May 2	May 4
Variegated Fritillary	May 3	May 23
Gray Hairstreak	May 9	May 2
Little Yellow	May 12	May 29
American Snout	May 13	June 22
Common Checkered-Skipper	May 16	June 24
Pipeline Swallowtail	May 21	August 30
Fiery Skipper	May 22	June 20
White M Hairstreak	May 27	-----
Dainty Sulphur	May 28	July 20
Zebra Swallowtail	May 28	-----
Checkered White	June 1	August 12
Sachem	June 17	October 9
Sleepy Orange	June 29	August 14
<b>Brazilian Skipper*</b>	<b>July 7</b>	-----
<b>Reakirt's Blue</b>	<b>July 8</b>	-----
<b>Southern Dogface</b>	<b>July 10</b>	-----

\* A butterfly never before observed in Wisconsin! (See the account in the July issue of the Badger ButterFlyer.)

Migrants were early because 2012 had the warmest Spring on record, and a very warm summer. In this table we compare first sightings in 2012 with 2010 which also had a warm spring, the 4th warmest on record.

## How Has the Hot Weather Affected Flight Periods?

I've compared this year's flight period with 2011 for two butterflies that fly in July (Juniper Hairstreak and Broad-winged Skipper.) The **Juniper Hairstreak** is especially interesting because it has two flight periods, the first in spring and the second in summer. Amazingly, this year's spring flight started on April 2, which was 44 days earlier than last year!! But remarkably, the second generation, starting on June 26, was only 14 days early. And the flight ended also about 2 weeks early. So the effect of the hot weather in March apparently moderated over time, retarding the amount of flight

advancement. This was probably due to increasingly poor conditions for caterpillars, slowing down their growth.

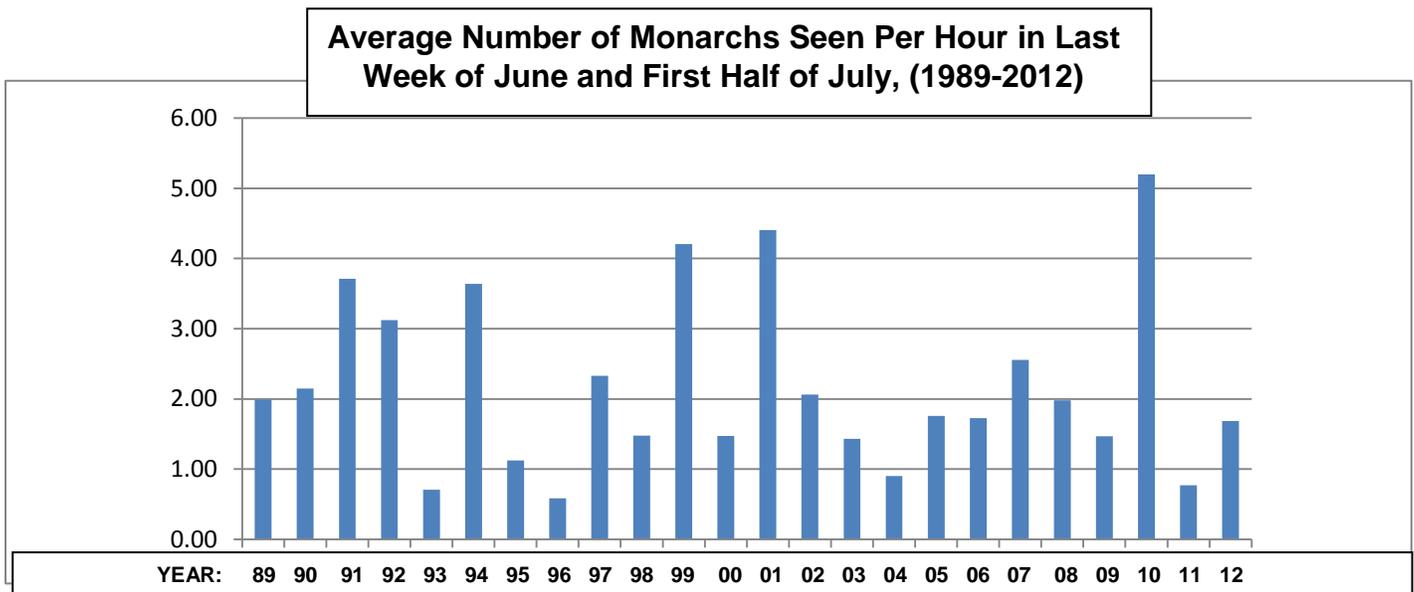
In the case of **Broad-winged Skipper** (which has only a single flight period), it's flight started on June 25, about 8 days early. And the flight ended about 10 days early. Apparently a butterfly that did not have a spring flight period does not experience as severe an advancement in its flight period.

Thus different species have had different amounts of shift in their flight period.

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## 4 HOW ARE MONARCHS DOING THIS YEAR?

Here is the Monarch abundance data for 2012, based on 6 all-day NABA counts conducted in Wisconsin between June 25 and July 16. The chart compares the number of Monarch's seen per hour of observation over the past 24 years. (However, in the earliest years, the data average is based on fewer counts.)



The 2012 result is double the especially poor density of 2011 and higher than 2009. That is encouraging. (2010 was an outstanding year for Monarch abundance.) Nevertheless, the 2012 value is still only 77% of the Monarch's historical *average* abundance. However, this only applies to southern Wisconsin. The abundance of the Monarchs overwintering in Mexico will ultimately depend on the Monarch population from the *entire* eastern U. S.

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## 5 NABA SEEKS PHOTO DOCUMENTATION OF THE CATERPILLAR FOODPLANTS OF MONARCHS.

The spring 2011 issue of American Butterflies has initiated an ambitious program to photographically document the caterpillar foodplants of North American butterflies. NABA is asking for photo documentation of the caterpillar foodplants of Monarchs (various milkweeds), for the next issue of American Butterflies. The results of the project will also be posted to the NABA website. Here's what this project requires:

- 1) An egg or caterpillar must be found on a particular individual plant in the wild or garden.
- 2) A photo of the actual individual plant, on which the egg(s) or caterpillar(s) was found, including a view(s) of features that distinguish the plant species from similar species, must be provided so that the identity of the plant species can be assured.
- 3) The resulting caterpillar(s) must be fed the same plant species through to adulthood.
- 4) Photos of the caterpillar(s) and chrysalis must be provided.
- 5) A photo of the adult that emerges must be provided so that the identity of the butterfly species can be assured.

The foregoing series can be completed either by netting a particular plant in the wild following the discovery of an egg(s) or caterpillar(s), and revisiting the plant over time; or by taking the egg(s) or caterpillar(s) to another location, rearing the caterpillar(s) on the same plant species, and then releasing the adult(s) at the same location where the egg(s) or caterpillar(s) was found.

This is a very worthwhile project because most reports of caterpillar food plants have not been documented with photos of the plant. Please send your photos to:

Lisa Lewis, NABA office Manager, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960, Phone: (973) 285-0907.

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## 6 NABA 2012 BIENNIAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN ARIZONA ON SEPTEMBER 6 - 9, 2012. LAST CHANCE!!

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA), of which SWBA is a Chapter, holds Meetings somewhere in North America every other year. Join NABA in Sierra Vista, Arizona. Southeast Arizona boasts **nearly 300 species of butterfly**. There will be all-day field trips on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. There is a Registration fee of \$275 per person for NABA Members (\$305 for non-members -- which includes membership in NABA.) This pays for 3 days of field trips, 3 days of box lunches, and a banquet dinner Friday and Saturday evenings. Bring your close-focusing binoculars and cameras, (no nets are permitted). You can visit [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org) for more information.

Brochure: [http://www.naba.org/ftp/registration\\_brochure\\_2012\\_Mar\\_9.pdf](http://www.naba.org/ftp/registration_brochure_2012_Mar_9.pdf)

Registration: [http://www.naba.org/meeting\\_reg.html](http://www.naba.org/meeting_reg.html)

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Theona Checkerspot

**The Badger ButterFlyer flits to you every month except 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](mailto:karlndot@charter.net)

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