

Badger ButterFlyer

The e-Newsletter of the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association

APRIL, 2015

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

1 NEXT MEETING ON TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2015

The next SWBA meeting will be held on **Tuesday, April 28, at 7:00 p.m.**, in the meeting room of the **Fitchburg Public Library, 5530 Lacy Road, Fitchburg, WI.** (**Mark your calendar!**)



West

East

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. **SWBA MEETING**
Tuesday, April 28, 2015.
2. **NEXT FIELD TRIP.**
Bauer Brockway Barrens.
3. **UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS.**
4. **Olympia Marble**
5. **Bumbling onto Purplish Coppers.**
6. **2015 Spring Butterfly Reports.**
7. **2015 NABA Butterfly Count Schedule.**

Public Program:

"Think Globally, Flutter Locally: Prairie Butterfly Conservation from a Worldwide Perspective: Version 2.0" (Ann Swengel)

This presentation is partly a summary of the talk that Ann gave at the Prairie Enthusiast's Prairie Conference at UW-Stevens Point. Preventing decline and loss of localized butterfly populations is a more effective conservation strategy, including during habitat rehabilitation, than hoping for recolonization. Beneficial long-term practices include land uses such as haying & grazing that are compatible with maintaining native flora while establishing some areas that are never burned. Small sites can be sufficient to support viable populations of localized species.

This summary will be combined with additional butterfly topics, especially the recent shocking developments concerning the **Poweshiek Skipperling**. Ann will also discuss exciting things ahead for the 2015 field season!



Poweshiek Skipperling

Ann Swengel is an internationally known butterfly expert from Baraboo, Wisconsin. She and her ornithologist husband, Scott, have extensively surveyed the populations of prairie butterflies in 5 states, and of Wisconsin barrens and bog butterfly species, for more than 25 years. They have published many dozens of scientific articles. Ann serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Insect Conservation, a global journal based in Europe.

Photo Show and Tell

Share some of your favorite butterfly, caterpillar, moth, or dragonfly photos and enjoy the photos of others. You are welcome to briefly comment about the subject of your photos. Please email up to 8 digital photos (as JPG file attachments) to Mike Reese at mikereese@wisconsinbutterflies.org Otherwise, you can bring digital photos to the meeting on a CD or USB flash drive.



Also a brief Election of Officers

If you are interested in serving as an officer of SWBA for the next year, or would like to nominate someone else, contact the Nominating Committee Chairperson Tod Highsmith at (608) 242-1168 or at todhighsmith@me.com

Everyone is invited to attend this free program. The meeting will last from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. We will have displays, books, handouts and plenty of time afterwards to enjoy *delicious* snacks and refreshments, and talk with our speaker and other butterfly enthusiasts.

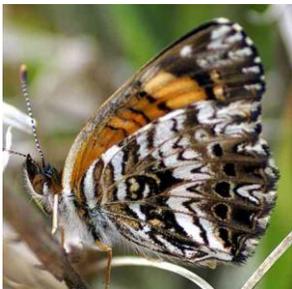
DIRECTIONS TO MEETING:

From the Beltline, take Fish Hatchery Road (= County D) south for about 2.4 miles and turn left (east) at Lacy Rd. After 1 block the library is on the left, at the intersection of Lacey Rd. and Research Park Rd. Continue on Lacy and take the entrance road around the far (east) end of the library to access parking near the entrance, (behind the library). **OR** if you prefer to park underground, turn left (north) onto Research Park Rd and then turn right into the ramp leading to the underground parking lot.

2 NEXT FIELD TRIP

Mark your calendar!

Sunday, May 17: Butterflies of Bauer-Brockway Barrens (Jackson Co.)



Gorgone Checkerspot

The best place in the state to look for early butterflies in May is Jackson County. **Mike Reese** will lead us in finding and observing many scarce and unusual species. We expect to find all 5 of the state's Elfins, including the very rare (and State Threatened) Frosted Elfin. We should find Olympia Marble, Gorgone Checkerspot, Cobweb Skipper, Dreamy and Sleepy Duskywings, etc. Over the past 7 years we have found between 15 and 42 species! Bring binoculars if you have them, close-focusing ones work best. (A few extra pairs of binoculars are available.) Also, bring a bag lunch and water. A hat, long pants and long sleeves are recommended. This is a joint trip of SWBA with the Madison Audubon Society.

Meet in Jackson Co. at 10:30 a.m. at the corner of West Bauer Road and Brockway Road. We will butterfly until 3:00 p.m. **DIRECTIONS:** From the intersection of I-94 and Hwy 54 in Black River Falls, go east on Hwy 54 approximately five miles to Brockway Road. Turn right on Brockway and drive 2.5 miles south to West Bauer Road. (This area is about 2 1/4 hours northwest of Madison via I-94.)

Participants must PRE-REGISTER for this trip by either calling Mike at (920) 647-0196, or include your phone number in an email to mikereese@wisconsinbutterflies.org (so we can contact you in case of cancellation due to weather).



Cobweb Skipper

3 UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS:

Details in next issue of the Badger ButterFlyer, or see the SWBA web site:

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

Saturday, June 20: Butterflies of Pleasant Valley Conservancy.
(Leader: Dr. Douglas Buege.)

Saturday, June 27: Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh.
(Leaders: Jan Axelson, Karl and Dorothy Legler.)

4 SPRING BUTTERFLY: OLYMPIA MARBLE

One of our earliest butterflies in spring is the Olympia Marble. Many people are unaware of this butterfly because it is small, restricted to dry sandy or barrens habitat mostly in the western part of the state, and has only a single early brood per year (flying in April-May). When seen very close up (e.g. with Pentax Papilio binoculars) or with macro photography, the Olympia Marble is a very beautiful butterfly. It has green eyes, white wings with a greenish marbling, abdomen with thick blue hair (to keep it warm in its cool early flight period), and in some individuals, an exquisite hint of pink along the leading edge of the wings.



Olympia Marble



Rock Cress

They are a challenge to see or photograph because they are fairly active and often spend only a short time nectaring at each tiny flower. (Patience is required; they perch longer in cooler conditions.)

The caterpillar food plants are various Rock Cresses, mostly Lyre-leaved Rock Cress, a tiny white flower found in dry, rocky, sandy soil.

The Olympia Marble can be seen at Spring Green Preserve, on Jones Road, off of Hwy 14. **Caution:** visitors are required to stay on the trails to protect

this State Natural Area. That is excellent advice as the property is full of Prickly Pear cacti with long sharp spines that are reputed to be able to penetrate shoes and boots!

5 BUMBLING ONTO PURPLISH COPPERS

By Ann B. Swengel

No butterfly in their right mind would walk out into Leola Wildlife Area (Adams County). Other than the occasional hunter walking a mowed truck path, we've never seen anyone else out there in the rough grassland. That's the British phrase for unmowed and ungrazed grassland, but I don't think they envisioned this: giant ragweed 8 feet tall and dense as a corn field, dense drifts of stinging nettles and thistles 6 feet tall.



Purplish Copper MALE

This needs a context. We've encountered Purplish Coppers here and there around Wisconsin since we started butterflying back in the late 1980s, but usually as one or a few individuals at a site. I can't say I've ever thought I could confidently choose a time and place where I expected to find a Purplish Copper, even though we have become fairly reliable at picking up the species somewhere in Crex Meadows on our annual visit in late July.

But Scott and I have been walking out there. In the late 1990s, we targeted higher and drier grassy areas in July, hoping to find Regal Fritillary, perhaps as a satellite population from Buena Vista Grassland. More recently we've been surveying for grassland birds, primarily to study Short-eared Owl. Thus I found myself with Scott on August 2, 2013 walking into an area well off-road to see what raptors might flush out of this dense vegetation. To my astonishment, I stumbled onto a male Purplish Copper on a berm by a deep drainage ditch that I assumed was the source habitat -- given the species' use of smartweeds as caterpillar food. Even more amazing, well out in the grassland far from the ditch, Scott then found another Purplish Copper.



Purplish Copper FEMALE

So we followed up at Leola this past summer. On July 30, 2014 we searched informally in and around that same ditch on the northwest side of County Road W and Apache Road, and found a female Purplish Copper. That seemed like terrific success, given the haphazard nature of our prior experiences. By then it was late in the day and clouding up a bit. Assuming our butterfly day was over, we proceeded on to bird surveying in the area southwest of County Road W and Archer Road, seemingly rather upland for smartweed. We found six Purplish Coppers!

Obviously that needed follow up as soon as possible. The next opportunity was August 3. I

sure never could have imagined we'd bumble into several orders of magnitude more individuals (over 234!) than I'd typically experienced with this species. Yes, we spent hours there that day, but wouldn't you when you've never seen Purplish Coppers at such numbers over such large land areas before? We returned several times in August, with numbers sharply decreasing, as would be expected given the apparent peak flight earlier in the month, but still better than our prior experiences. Astonishingly (if you've ever looked for immatures of localized butterflies), I accidentally bumped into Purplish Copper caterpillars on August 23 while walking along the roadside of Archer Road counting butterflies. Because the copper adults often stayed low to the ground, and were strongly tied to the vicinity of their caterpillar food plants, I looked down right in front of me for coppers perching on smartweed, and there were these green lycaenid larvae.

The books are equivocal about whether this species overwinters as an egg or pupa. So now we were curious whether any of those caterpillars would still complete the generation this year. Adult numbers had an uptick on September 6, although nothing like early August, and on September 14, seemed to be coming down. So once again, I was totally unprepared for the next blowout in numbers, again 213 individuals, on September 26. We found our last copper of the year on October 12, 2014, again

in deteriorating weather. Other reporters found the last Purplish Copper of the year on October 26.

Yes, 2014 was a better than average year for Purplish Copper in Wisconsin generally, as measured by how many people reported finding the species and at how many places. But Leola still far exceeded anything we or anyone else we know of has reported for this species elsewhere in Wisconsin in 2014. Even though we had been rambling around Leola for some years, we mostly weren't there at times or in weather conditions conducive to finding this butterfly. On the other hand, I'm also reminded how easy it is to overlook Purplish Copper in low numbers if they're not nectaring, but instead are perching low in the vegetation or flying away rapidly.

So we're very interested in seeing how reliably findable this species will be, and in how many places and at what numbers, at Leola in coming years. With our and your reports, perhaps we'll collectively figure out better what makes this species tick in Wisconsin. Since Leola has been in active habitat management for Greater Prairie-Chickens for decades, perhaps we can also figure out what it is that conservation managers have already been doing for another species that is also helping Purplish Coppers find what they're looking for too.

6 BUTTERFLIES REPORTED UP TO APRIL 19 AT www.wisconsinbutterflies.org IN SPRING OF 2015, BUTTERFLIES ARE DOING BETTER THAN SPRING OF 2014.

The central question concerning butterflies in the spring of 2015 is: Did the combination of very cold temperatures this winter, and deficient insulating snow cover, harm our butterfly populations? Let's compare butterflies this spring with last spring. Since hibernators (Anglewings: Eastern Comma, Gray Comma, Satyr Comma and Greenish Comma, and Tortoiseshells: Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Compton Tortoiseshell, Mourning Cloak) are better able to withstand winter cold, we should look especially at the non-hibernators. The first non-hibernators were overwintering as a chrysalis.



Compton Tortoiseshell

Last spring (2014) was cold. Not even the hibernators were out during March! No butterflies had been seen until April. And the first non-hibernator was a Cabbage White -- seen on April 20!!

Compare with this spring: The hibernators were out from March 9 onward. The first non-hibernator (Cabbage White) was seen on April 2. And by April 19, eight species of non-hibernators were seen (including a total of 42 Cabbage Whites and 110 Olympia Marbles). And this is all BEFORE April 20 -- the date that the first non-hibernator (Cabbage White) was seen in 2014! So far, our butterflies are doing much better this spring than last.

[Keep sending reports to wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org)
[and see which butterflies are flying and enjoy the photographs that reporters send in.](#)

7 2015 NABA BUTTERFLY COUNT SCHEDULE

These are NABA's "4th of July" butterfly counts, open to the public. They are the butterfly analogue of "Christmas" Bird Counts held in winter. These butterfly counts are conducted exactly like Christmas Bird Counts: On one day, identify butterfly species and count individuals, staying within a 15 mile diameter circle. Various areas within the circled are visited. In North America, the data from 451 counts is collected and published annually. Some 15 NABA Butterfly Counts take place in Wisconsin each year. Below are ones that are connected with SWBA.

This is a good way to gain more experience with a range of butterflies. Whether experienced or novice, you are always welcome to participate. To join in, contact the coordinators (Karl and Dorothy Legler, karlndot@charter.net, (608) 643-4926).

(NABA charges a \$3 fee to participate in a count, to help defray the cost of publication.)

(For a list of additional Butterfly Counts in Wisconsin and elsewhere, visit NABA's Web site at www.naba.org/counts/us_mx_map.html Contacts are Listed.)

COUNT NAME	DAY	DATE	COUNTY	NUMBER OF YEARS
Mud Lake	Wednesday	July 1	Columbia County	26
Madison	Sunday	July 5	Dane County	24
Oconto	Monday	July 6	Oconto County	NEW
Trempealeau	Wednesday	July 8	Trempealeau County	25
Dubuque (Wis. portion)	Sunday	July 12	Grant County	12
Northern Kettle Moraine	Tuesday	July 14	Fond du Lac County	18
Sister Bay	Thursday	July 16	Door County	14

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

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NABA Liaison: Joan Braune

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.