

## **Introduction to the North American Butterfly Association Checklist & English Names of North American Butterflies: First Edition. 1995.**

This checklist includes all 717 species of butterflies that have been recorded in North America, north of Mexico. This list can serve both as a means of keeping your “life list” (or year list, or state list, or photo list) and as a vehicle for standardizing the English names of North American butterflies. We hope that the availability of this checklist will serve to spur the growth of butterflying in North America.

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA), a non-profit organization, was organized in the summer of 1992. The purposes of NABA include educating the public about the non-consumptive (netless) enjoyment of butterflies. One of the factors hindering the enjoyment of butterflies has been the bewildering plethora of English names given to butterflies. Each author of a book dealing with butterflies has used whatever names struck his/her fancy. Many of these authors were hostile to the use of English names (preferring scientific names) and included English names only at the urging of their publishers. Thus the “English” names they chose was often simply the scientific name reversed.

In order to standardize the English names of North American butterflies, NABA quickly formed a Committee on English Names. The committee consisted of Brian Cassis, NABA secretary and president of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club; Jeffrey Glassberg, NABA president, former president of Xerces Society, vice-president of the New York City Butterfly Club and author of *Butterflies through Binoculars* (1993. Oxford University Press); Paul Opler, NABA vp, president of the Lepidopterists’ Society, and author of *A Field Guide to Eastern Butterflies* (1992. Houghton-Mifflin); Robert Robbins, NABA vp and curator of Lepidoptera at the Smithsonian Institution; Guy Tudor, president of the New York City Butterfly Club.

Following lengthy discussions by telephone and mail, the committee met on July 4, 1992; and then again on October 26, 1992; December 22, 1992; May 21, 1993; and November 2-3, 1993; to determine the NABA list of English names for butterflies.

The committee first considered guidelines concerning English names of butterflies. It was noted that the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) has promulgated a list of English names for birds for more than 100 years. The committee decided that it should make use of the accumulated experience of the AOU and adopt relevant sections of its policy concerning English names as expressed in the *Check-list of North American Birds*, sixth edition, 1983. Of the six numbered paragraphs dealing with English names, we adopted variants (a modified for butterflies) of number 1,3,4 and 5, which now appear as our section 1,2,6, and 3 respectively. Sections 4 and 5, below, do not correspond to any AOU section.

AOU paragraph number 2 attempts to create a global system for English names. This attempt has not yet succeeded with birds. As with birds, a large number of our butterfly species also occur in Eurasia and are known by a different English name there, e.g., Cabbage White-Small White; Phoebus Parnassian-Small Apollo; Disa Alpine-Arctic Ringlet. The committee decided not to make wholesale changes in the English names of American butterflies without concomitant changes in the names of some Eurasian butterflies. Here then are the policy guidelines that we adopted:

### **Policies appropriate mainly for species with existing English names.**

1. Retain well established names for well-known and widely distributed species, even if the group name or a modifier is not precisely accurate, universally appropriate, or descriptively the best possible. For example, not all Roadside-Skippers are best found along roadsides and the Great Purple Hairstreak is blue. Changing such long established names would only contribute to confusion, not lessen it. If the maintenance of an existing species name would create significant confusion, consideration should be given to how widespread and commonly used is the existing name and balance this with the degree of confusion that the existing name might create.

2. It is undesirable to have one species name be a subset of another species name, e.g. Eyed Brown and Appalachian Eyed Brown. This leads to confusion as to whether one is referring to the species Eyed Brown (*Satyrodes eurydice*) or to eyed brown species (either *S. Eurydice* or *S. Appalachia*). To avoid this problem used modifiers to distinguish species which would otherwise comprise a set of nested names. Consider exceptions where one species is common and widespread and its name is a subset of the name of a species that is geographically restricted and the two species do not occur together.

3. When two taxa previously recognized as different species with different English names are merged

a) if one of the existing names is much more widely known and used than the other name, use the widely known name for the entire merged species if it is not inappropriate (retain the unused name in the event of a re-split).

b) if the existing names are equally well known, use the existing name that best applies to the entire species. Thus, if we merged two species of skipper having white heads and heretofore known as the Maine Skipper and the White-headed Skipper (found throughout the northeast), the best choice of name for the merged species would be White-headed Skipper.

c) if the existing names are totally inappropriate for the lumped species, consideration should be given to a new name.

### **Policies appropriate mainly for species with no well-established English name.**

4. When most species in an assemblage of closely related species are recognizable as members of that assemblage, consideration should be given to adopting a group name of that assemblage. If some members of the assemblage already are very widely known by an existing group name, consideration should be given to maintaining this name as an exception.

5. A scientific name should be used as the basis of a new English name only if the choice of other names is unsatisfactory and the scientific name is readily pronounceable. If the scientific name is changed, the English name is left with no connection to the group or species. In addition, the English name might now create confusion because that old scientific name might now be applied to a different species.

6. In the New World tropics there are many species that have no well-established English names. Some earlier authors have coined species and/or group names in reference to species or groups that barely enter the United States. In many cases these names have proved to be seriously inappropriate in light of current knowledge of related species, species ranges, etc. Previously published names should be used, however, if they are reasonably appropriate and/or well established. When a new species name is needed, that name should impart some relevant information about the species. Without being exhaustive, this information might be related to the butterfly's wing pattern, wing shape, behavior, larval host plant, geographic range, discoverer, describer, etc.

### **Scientific Names**

No all workers agree on the scientific status of certain species of genera. Being an English names committee, rather than a scientific committee, we decided not to make an independent evaluation of the validity of each species. Rather, for operational purposes the committee decided to follow these authorities: Robbins and Lamas for hairstreaks (manuscript in preparation); Opler (1992) for all species treated (except for hairstreak); and Scott (1986) for all other species. Because many users of this checklist may want to keep track of their sightings of the more well-marked subspecies, and because some of these subspecies may well merit full species status, we have included separate (but indented) lines for some of these. The English name used for these subspecies should be viewed as tentative.

### **English Names for Species Occurring in North America north of Mexico.**

We next decided to establish an English names list for the species of butterflies found in North America north of Mexico.

We took as our point of departure *The Common Names of North American Butterflies* by J. Miller (1992). In this work Dr. Miller compiled a listing of most of the English names used for North American butterflies in general publication. She then highlighted one of the names; often the one that appears most frequently in a chosen subset of those publications. This list, while a useful compilation, suffers from the same drawbacks as other published works where a single author attaches an English name to each species.

1. The list of highlighted names was not the "official" list of any organization, 2. The list contains an inordinate number of scientific names masking as English names, and 3. Because individual names were chosen without considering larger groupings or related tropical species, the list is filled with such incongruities as *Anteos clorinde* being called the White Angled Sulphur while the only closely related species in North America, *Anteos maerula*, is called the Yellow Brimstone.

Following the list is a discussion of all names that differ from the name highlighted by Miller and selected other names, indicating the reasons that the committee adopted the chosen name. Also indicated is the degree of unanimity of the committee about the chosen name. Because what follows is a collation of the geographical lists which appeared in *American Butterflies* volume 1, number 1 through volume 2 number 1, discussions sometimes refer to species which appear later in the list.

Because a number of widely used butterfly guides were published before the appearance of this list, in some cases they use different English names. In most cases, species can be matched by reference to the scientific name.

The committee realizes that it will be the rare individual who will agree with every name we have adopted and that some individuals will strongly disagree with many of the names we have adopted. Nonetheless, we have tried to apply reason and guiding principles, rather than mere personal preference, to our selection of names. This list will be the official list of English names for the North American Butterfly Association and we hope that it will be adopted by all North Americans interested in butterflies so that we can truly stabilize the names of butterflies.