

# Butterfly Conservation

This double issue of *American Butterflies* focuses on butterfly conservation. The largest issue of *American Butterflies* ever published, I'm sorry to say that it doesn't paint a pretty picture. While not as dire as much of Europe, the situation for butterflies in North America continues to deteriorate.

As you can learn from this issue, the two major ecosystems that are most in danger are the South Florida subtropical hardwood hammocks and pine rockland (see the article by Dennis Olle on page 4) and the tallgrass prairies of the Midwest (see the article on page 64 by Ann Swengel). Almost nothing remains of either of these amazing habitats and so the many butterfly species that depend upon them are also teetering on the edge, or have already fallen over the edge.

There are also some very localized species that are in danger, with Hermes Copper probably the most important example, even though it is inexplicably not federally listed as endangered (see the article by Daniel Marschalek and Michael Klein on page 20).

Over a larger scale, butterflies are also declining, in part because a large percentage of butterfly species depend upon transitional habitats. These butterfly species inhabit areas which, if left to themselves, will, over time, become a woodland. Thus, species such as Coral Hairstreaks and Meadow Fritillaries need a constant replenishing of habitat as their old habitats disappear (see the article about the decline of butterflies in Westchester County, New York on page 34). They need change and, historically, the natural world has always been about change.

But, human beings want stasis. If a river runs a certain way today, people want it to run the same way tomorrow. Too bad for Bronze Coppers! And, if an area is put aside to "preserve" it is generally left to its own devices, especially because funding for acquiring a property is much easier to find than is funding to manage a property.

Traditionally, farm areas provided some habitat for butterflies — fields left fallow, areas of the farm that were marginal for farming, weedy interstices of the farmed land itself. Articles on pages 16 and 46 of this issue, by Dennis Jonason

and Conrad Vispo, respectively, explore the relationship of agriculture to butterflies.

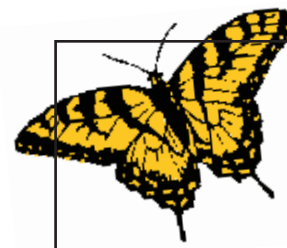
One of the butterflies that has been most impacted by changes in agricultural practices is the Monarch. Agriculture in the Midwest has changed from family farms to corporate farms and from small-scale farming to large-scale farms that succeed in eliminating almost all "weeds," including milkweeds, the only caterpillar foodplants for Monarchs. The resulting decline in milkweeds available to Monarchs is almost certainly a major factor in the greatly declining number of Monarchs present in North America. (See the article by Karen Oberhauser on page 56 of this issue.)

OK. Enough about the bad stuff! What can you do to be positive. Well, by joining NABA you have already done something positive, helping to create a constituency (this includes you!) that vitally cares about butterflies. You can come to the Members Meeting in Chattanooga, TN this June to join with other butterflyers! Without people who care about them, butterflies will be goners.

You can also help NABA change the pattern of home plantings in North America. You can start by creating your own butterfly garden and certifying it as part of the NABA Program for Butterfly Gardens and Habitats. Then you can help NABA convince others also to take part in the program.

Single family houses in the U.S. sit on somewhere between 25 million and 50 million acres of plantable land. For most people, the plantings mean a few exotic shrubs and a non-native lawn. If we can convince people to plant native grasses, wildflowers and shrubs around their houses, this would create millions of acres of habitat for many different butterfly species.

Next month, NABA will unveil a major revision of the NABA Program for Butterfly Gardens and Habitats web pages. I urge you to go to [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org) and check out the new format and information. Let's paint suburbia with butterflies!



## The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) For the Love of Butterflies

Please photocopy this membership application form and pass it along to friends and acquaintances who might be interested in NABA

**Yes! I want to join NABA, the North American Butterfly Association,** and receive *American Butterflies* and *The Butterfly Gardener* and/or contribute to building the premier butterfly garden in the world, the National Butterfly Center. The Center, located on approximately 100 acres of land fronting the Rio Grande River in Mission, Texas uses native trees, shrubs and wildflowers to create a spectacular natural butterfly garden that importantly benefits butterflies, an endangered ecosystem and the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

**Visit our web site at [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org)**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests (circle): Listing, Gardening, Observation, Photography, Conservation,  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Tax-deductible dues enclosed (circle): Regular \$35 (\$70 outside U.S., Canada or Mexico), Family \$45 (\$90 outside North Am.). Special sponsorship levels: Copper \$55; Skipper \$100; Admiral \$250; Monarch \$1000. Institution/Library subscription to all annual publications \$60 (\$100 outside U.S., Canada or Mexico). Special tax-deductible contributions to NABA (please circle): \$125, \$200, \$1000, \$5000. Mail checks (in U.S. dollars) to: NABA, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960

### ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

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### MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

If you have questions about missing magazines, membership expiration date, change of address, etc., please write to: NABA, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960 or email to [naba@naba.org](mailto:naba@naba.org).

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