

Badger Butterfly

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

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

1 HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT SWBA MEETING

Twenty butterfly enthusiasts attended the April 25th SWBA meeting. **Kyle Johnson** discussed the results of the very extensive surveys he has made of the Boreal



Kyle Johnson

butterflies of the northern Great Lakes. He showed photos of the various northern species and used numerous maps to show where the surveys found a species, and where the surveys did not find the species. Kyle talked about identification, food plants and habitat. Some of the butterflies are present in Minnesota, Michigan or Ontario but have not yet been found in Wisconsin, e.g. Western Pine Elfin.

Treasurer Ginny Nelson provided an update on finances, and refreshments were provided by **Dorothy Legler**. Six people showed photos for **PHOTO SHOW AND TELL** at the meeting: **Stan Rehm, Jim Otto, Karl Legler, Dorothy Legler and Larry Scheunemann**. Thanks to these contributors!

Election of Officers

The officers of SWBA elected for this year are:

President: Karl Legler karlndot@charter.net
Vice President: Dr. Douglas Buege djbuege@gmail.com
Secretary: Dorothy Legler
Treasurer: Ginny Nelson

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Highlights of Last Meeting.
2. NEXT FIELD TRIPS on May 19 and June 16.
3. RED ADMIRAL EXPLOSION!!
4. GARDENING FOR RED ADMIRALS: Nettles!
5. Butterflies Reported in April.
6. Very Rare Butterfly Seen.
7. Results of 2011 Wis. NABA counts.
8. Dates for some Wis. counts.

2 NEXT FIELD TRIPS Mark your calendars!

Saturday, May 19: 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 various Elfins, including the very rare (and State Threatened) Frosted Elfin. We should find Olympia Marble, Gorgone Checkerspot, Cobweb Skipper, Dreamy and Sleepy Duskywings, etc. Bring binoculars if you have them,



Cobweb Skipper

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) 787-2341, or include your phone number in an email to mikereese@wisconsinbutterflies.org (so we can contact you in case of cancellation due to weather).

Saturday, June 16–Butterflies & Wildflowers at Pleasant Valley Conservancy

Pleasant Valley Conservancy is a beautiful state natural area situated in the Driftless Area, with steep goat prairies, oak savanna, and a large high quality marsh. This time of year we hope to see Baltimore Checkerspot and perhaps some wetland skippers. Other possible butterfly species include swallowtails, Silvery Checkerspot, fritillaries, and blues. All of these butterflies will have many wonderful native plants to nectar on this time of year. We will be hiking about two miles. Long pants, a hat, water, and sturdy hiking shoes are recommended. Leaders are Ann Thering and Tom and Kathie Brock. This is a joint trip of SWBA with the Madison Audubon Society and The Prairie Enthusiasts. Optional: bring along a bag lunch for after the field trip; beverages and dessert will be provided. Bring binoculars--the closer they focus, the better. (We have a few extra binoculars.) Contact the trip leaders only if you have a question about the trip. Tom: [\(608\) 238-5050](tel:6082385050), tdbrock@charter.net, or Ann: acthering@gmail.com, [\(608\) 836-1097](tel:6088361097).

Meet at 11:00 a.m. (Trip will last until 12:30 or so.) **Directions:** Heading south into downtown Black Earth follow County Hwy F as it turns right (west). After a mile or so, F turns left (south). Continue on F for another 3 3/4 miles turning left onto Pleasant Valley Road. Drive 3/4 mile (past the buildings on the right) to the state natural area sign. Park off the road. We'll meet near the sign/gate area and then proceed into the wetland.

Saturday, June 30: Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh

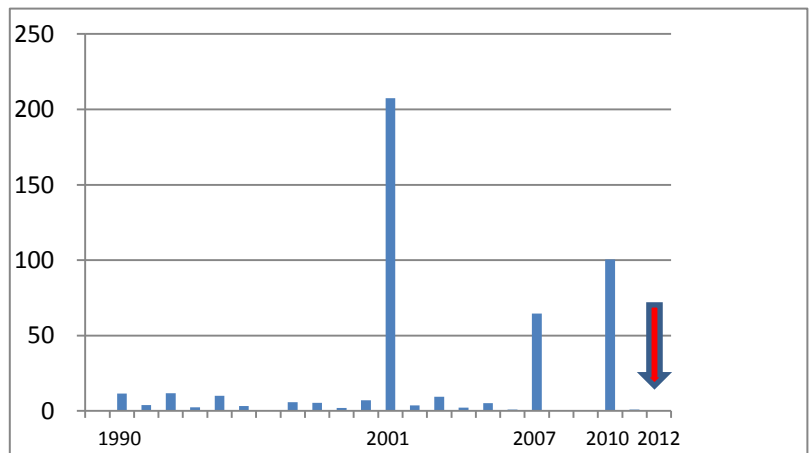
Details will be in the June Badger ButterFlyer. Details will also be posted on the SWBA web site.

3 RED ADMIRAL EXPLOSION!!! What's Up With That?



Red Admiral

You have probably already seen scads of Red Admirals, nectaring at flowers, and as a high-speed dark medium-sized butterfly careening past you on its way north! In most years, moderate numbers of Admirals migrate northward into the state. Red Admirals are usually not very common in Wisconsin, except in years when their population explodes in the South and large numbers migrate northward into Wisconsin (and Canada) becoming very common to abundant. On April 24, I looked down the east-west running Hwy 14, with 8.5x binoculars, to a sign that was 1/5 mile away.



Red Admiral Population Explosions

This chart shows Red Admiral counts from 1989-2012. Each year represents 2 to 6 all-day NABA butterfly counts in Wis. in July. The number is the average number of Red Admirals per count. Years with population explosions are indicated by the presence of a year label. The 1990 explosion did not show up in our data but is known from other sources. Another earlier peak was in 1983. The red arrow points to the 2012 invasion. Data will be obtained by upcoming NABA counts..

I counted 61 Red Admirals crossing the road, heading north, in 60 seconds! Extrapolation from a single data point is precarious but fun: that's 305 butterflies crossing a mile of the highway per minute! Wisconsin's southern boundary is 149 miles wide. That's 45,563 butterflies streaming into the state each minute!

There have been such explosions in 1983, 1990, 2001, 2007, 2010, and now in 2012. One of the striking things about this phenomenon is how it has become more frequent in recent years: this is the 3rd Red Admiral invasion in just 6 years! And this is the largest Red Admiral invasion in anyone's memory!

Most of Wisconsin's butterfly species are permanent residents; they can survive our winters in some form (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis or adult butterfly). But the Red Admiral is relatively freeze intolerant so it does not usually survive our winter and so isn't a permanent resident. Further south it overwinters as an adult butterfly.

WHAT CAUSES THESE OUTBREAKS OF RED ADMIRALS? The cause is not fully understood. But probably because of the unusually mild winter, Red Admirals did not die back all the way to the deep South so more of the northern "lingerers" survived, providing a boost to the Red Admiral population. Secondly, in the South, ideal

growing conditions produced a good population. We noticed good numbers of Red Admirals in south-central Texas in the first few days of March. Then a prolonged 16-day record-breaking heat wave, with southerly winds in mid-March, allowed Red Admirals to stream northward to Wisconsin and beyond. The first Red Admiral was found in Milwaukee County by Judith Huf on March 21. However, there may be other unknown factors at work in these population peaks, such as changes in the population of the Red Admiral's parasites or predators.

Red Admirals breed here, so we will see a 2nd generation this summer, and maybe even a 3rd generation (since they got started so early). There apparently is some movement back southward in the fall.

Red Admirals have a distinctive red-orange band along edge of hind wing and cutting across the forewing. Such a bright pattern usually signals to predators that the insect is poisonous, but actually the Red Admiral is fooling predators, since it is palatable. They are fast, erratic flyers and are very active, even late in the day. The butterflies feed on sap, decaying material and nectar. Breeding Red Admirals typically are found around moist wood edges or damp meadows. The caterpillar food plant is mostly Nettles (See next section).

4 GARDENING FOR RED ADMIRALS: NETTLES! By Dorothy Legler

The Red Admiral's caterpillar food plants are: **Stinging Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*), **Wood Nettle** (*Laporta canadensis*), **False-Nettle** (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), **Pellitory** (*Parietaria pennsylvanica*) and **Common Hops** (*Humulus lupulus*). These are all native species. Be aware that both Stinging and Wood Nettle have stinging hairs, so put them in a location where you won't easily brush against them. To handle them wear gloves.

A single green egg is laid on top of a Nettles leaf. The young caterpillars build nests of tied leaves on the shoot tips. Later they may use single folded leaves. I have a small patch of Stinging Nettles in my yard, in an isolated location. Most nettles prefer a moist, somewhat shaded site. Stinging Nettles will grow in dry sites also. Another good choice for home gardens would be False Nettle which I started from seed purchased from Prairie Moon Nursery. Nettles not only attract Red Admirals but some other butterflies as well: Question Mark uses Stinging and False Nettle. The Eastern Comma uses Stinging, False and Wood Nettle. Milbert's Tortoiseshell utilizes Stinging and Wood Nettle.



Red Admiral caterpillar
Photo by Harald Supfle.

5 BUTTERFLIES REPORTED IN APRIL TO www.wisconsinbutterflies.org

Mike Reese's Wisconsin butterfly website received some **227 reports** detailing many hundreds of butterflies. This is more than double the previous high of 100 reports for April, 2010. The massive hot spell in March was followed by continuing warm weather in April. In the first 18 days of April temperatures were above average (except for two days), speeding up butterfly development. In the last 12 days of April temperatures were below average (except for 2 days), somewhat retarding butterfly development. Many butterflies were weeks ahead of their usual schedule. A total of 32 species were new for the year in April, see table below. This brings the total species reported, by the end of April, to 48.

DATE FIRST SEEN 2012	SPECIES	DATE FIRST SEEN 2012	SPECIES
April 1	Hoary Elfin	April 12	Freija Fritillary
April 1	Henry's Elfin	April 14	Orange Sulphur
April 1	Eastern Pine Elfin	April 14	Harvester
April 2	Juniper Hairstreak	April 14	Frosted Elfin
April 2	Green Comma	April 14	Persius Duskywing
April 4	Painted Lady	April 14	Silver-spotted Skipper
April 4	Eastern Tailed-Blue	April 14	Columbine Duskywing
April 4	Juvenal's Duskywing	April 14	Cobweb Skipper
April 5	Black Swallowtail	April 17	Common Buckeye
April 5	Pearl Crescent	April 17	American Copper
April 5	Sleepy Duskywing	April 20	Western White
April 6	Satyr Comma	April 22	Dreamy Duskywing
April 7	Silvery Blue	April 23	Gorgone Checkerspot
April 8	Wild Indigo Duskywing	April 23	Red-disked Alpine
April 9	Meadow Fritillary	April 23	Giant Swallowtail
April 12	Common Roadside Skipper	April 24	Common Sootywing

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and American Lady

Last year was one of the best years ever for the **Eastern Tiger Swallowtail**. They became very common. That means that many eggs were laid, caterpillars developed, and they overwintered as a chrysalis. To further maximize the population all that was needed was a mild winter. That is exactly what we had! So the number of chrysalises must have been very high and now an inordinate number of these chrysalises will have survived. Last year the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail was first seen on May 7. This year it was first seen on March 28 -- 5 weeks ahead of last year!!! In fact, a total of 93 individuals had been reported by the end of April. The average was about 1 Tiger for every 3 reports.

Another butterfly that is doing quite well this year is the **American Lady**. It appeared on March 28, nearly three weeks ahead of 2010 (April 17).

MIGRANTS FROM THE SOUTH:

The exceptional warm weather in March and the first part of April, has brought into the state other migrant butterflies from the South, besides Red Admiral. The list at right compares the dates of first report in 2012 with a previous instance of an early spring, 2010. This year Red Admirals have been 3 weeks earlier than in 2010, the previous invasion year! The **Monarch** has arrived early, as in 2010. That is a good sign because 2010 was a very strong year for Monarchs. We hope they are on track for a boost to their sagging population.

We were in South Central Texas in the first few days of



Variegated Fritillary

March and found Variegated Fritillaries, Dainty Sulphurs, and

Red Admirals in abundance. We wondered if that foreshadowed their reaching Wisconsin in good numbers. Apparently the answer is yes! The **Variegated Fritillary** has now been seen in Wisconsin 3 weeks earlier than in 2010! Mike Reese has called attention to a report from Point Pelee National Park on the Canadian side of Lake Eirie, which should indicate some of what we will be seeing this year: They have already seen immigrants Common Checkered-Skippers, Little Yellows, Dainty

SPECIES	MIGRANTS FROM THE SOUTH 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

Sulphurs, Gray Hairstreaks, Fiery Skippers, and Sleepy Oranges!

Keep sending your sightings to Mike Reese's outstanding 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!**

6 VERY RARE BUTTERFLY SEEN: WESTERN WHITE!

On Friday, April 20, 2012, Ryan Brady discovered and photographed a **Western White** in Ashland (Ashland County). It is an extremely rare stray into Wisconsin from Minnesota. This was only the 3rd sighting ever for Wisconsin! Amazingly, Ryan also found the 2nd state record for this species last year, west of Washburn, in Bayfield County!



Western White
Photo by Ryan Brady

7 RESULTS OF 2011 NABA BUTTERFLY COUNTS IN WISCONSIN

COUNT	Species	Individuals	COUNT	Species	Individuals
Avoca (fall)	24	128	North. Kettle Moraine	43	638
Baraboo	57	662	Pederson's Gardens	12	69
Bayfield County (South)	34	841	Sandhill/Seneca	41	732
Beaver Creek Reserve	34	609	Sister Bay	32	437
Cornucopia	54	708	Trempealeau	39	446
Crex Meadows	48	2136	Wazee (spring)	26	732
Gilmanton	39	604	Wazee (summer)	50	1564
Madison	34	655	Wehr Nature Center	15	108
Mud Lake	23	218			

Each year about **452 butterfly counts** are conducted in North America by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). SWBA is a Wis. chapter of NABA. The report on these counts, **NABA Butterfly Counts 2011 Report**, has now been published. (To purchase a copy, see box below.) It contains details on all the counts including numbers for each species for each count, hours of counting, number and names of observers, weather conditions, etc. **Seventeen** NABA counts were conducted in Wisconsin in 2011. **Seventy-five** observers found, identified and counted a total of **11,287 butterflies**.

SPECIES WITH WISCONSIN COUNTS THE HIGHEST IN NORTH AMERICA!

Several of our Wisconsin counts found one or more species in the highest numbers for any North American 2011 Count! Listed in the table below are the numbers of individuals. **Bold Numbers with an asterisk (*)** have set a *new record high* for North American NABA counts!

Wazee (spring)		South Bayfield County		Madison	
Olympia Marble	136*	Aphrodite Fritillary	288	Least Skipper	196
Hoary Elfin	11	Compton Tortoiseshell	60	Sandhill/Seneca	
Frosted Elfin	20*	Mourning Cloak	70	Two-spotted Skipper	19
Henry's Elfin	3	Crex Meadows		Northern Kettle Moraine	
E. Pine Elfin	10	Coral Hairstreak	75	Swamp Metalmark	24
Juvenal's Duskywing	199*	Viceroy	79	Wazee (summer)	
Cobweb Skipper	4	Common Wood-Nymph	894	Gorgone Checkerspot	30
Cornucopia		Mottled Duskywing	25	Cobweb Skipper	4
Leonard's Skipper	1			Karner Blue	402

If you would like a copy of the 128 page, spiral bound **NABA Butterfly Counts 2011 Report**, which contains details on all 452 NABA counts, it may be ordered from the address below. The cost is \$11 for NABA/SWBA members and \$16 for non-NABA members. Copies of the previous NABA Butterfly Count Reports are also available. Shipping and handling is \$2 for the first item and \$1 for each additional item. Please make check payable to NABA and send to:

NABA Butterfly Count
4 Delaware Rd.
Morristown, NJ 07960

SWBA will have a field trip to this interesting area: **Bauer Brockway Barrens** (within the Wazee-spring count circle) on Saturday, May 19. See Article #2 above.

8 DATES FOR SOME NABA "4TH OF JULY" BUTTERFLY COUNTS

These butterfly counts are conducted exactly like Christmas Bird Counts: Identify butterfly species and count individuals, staying within a 15 mile diameter circle. The data from hundreds of counts is collected and published. Some 17 NABA Butterfly Counts take place in Wisconsin each year. Below are ones that are connected with SWBA.

- ❖ Mud Lake (Columbia County) Monday, June 25, 2012
- ❖ Madison (Dane County) Sunday, July 1, 2012
- ❖ Trempealeau (Trempealeau County) Monday, July 9, 2012
- ❖ Sister Bay (Door County) Thursday, July 12, 2012
- ❖ Northern Kettle Moraine (Fond du Lac County) Monday, July 16, 2012

To join in on these fun counts -- or for more information about SWBA-sponsored NABA counts, please contact the SWBA count 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.)

The Badger ButterFlyer flits to you every month in spring, summer and fall. The next issue will be in JUNE.

Officers of SWBA:

President: Karl Legler
karlndot@charter.net
Vice-President: Dr. Douglas Buege
djbuege@gmail.com
Secretary: Dorothy Legler
Treasurer: Ginny Nelson

Other SWBA contributors:

e-Newsletter Editor: Karl Legler
karlndot@charter.net
Webmaster: Ann Thering
Butterfly Reporting:
Mike Reese at
www.wisconsinbutterflies.org

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.