



The Antenna

News and Information from the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network

Take Time to Read...

Hunting for Frogs on Elston By Jerry Sullivan
Published by The University of Chicago Press, 2004
\$25.00 (with proceeds going to support Chicago Wilderness)
ISBN 0-226-77993-9

Jerry Sullivan was a delightful man who passed away last year from cancer. He is sorely missed by everyone involved with restoration in the Chicagoland area. His wit is legendary, and this book is a collection of some of his weekly *Field and Stream* columns, originally published in the *Chicago Reader*.

Not only are these columns fun to read, given his irreverent humor, but he was a true naturalist. His knowledge of restoration and our native ecosystems was incredible. He was also friends with many of the key players in restoration, including our director Doug Taron. In fact, Doug credits Jerry with giving him the confidence to switch careers and become the Curator of Biology at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

If you want to learn about the people involved in saving our natural areas, as well as the natural areas and the organisms that make them so unique, read this book. Many of the articles may make you laugh, but every one of them will teach you or make you think about the natural world around us.

Initial Report for 2004 Season

Many monitors reported low numbers of butterflies this year, due to the unseasonably cool summer we had. While we did have some hot days, the average temperature was about 10 degrees cooler than usual. This resulted in an unusual effect in the fritillaries. Dark morphs of the Great Spangled Fritillaries were reported throughout our network. Cold can have this effect, and is the likely cause this year. The upperside of the frit is normally orange throughout, with black markings over most of the wings. The dark morph has large dark brown to black areas covering the inner half of all four wings. Monitor Tom Peterson has a great photo showing this effect at <http://tdpc02.fnal.gov/peterson/tom/Butterflies/FermilabButterflyTable.html>

Glacial Park Summer Field Experience - Contributed by Jim Peterson

We held our summer outdoor workshop at Glacial Park in McHenry County on Saturday, July 17. We parked in the parking lot just inside the entrance, and got started a little after 11 AM. The day started out very cool and cloudy, but cleared off and warmed up enough during the time we were there, so that we had a pretty successful time studying some butterflies which we caught, examined, and then, of course, released. We walked north up the bike path from the parking lot and spent most of our time there examining butterflies coming to nectar in the flowers along the west side of the path.

Among the butterflies we either saw or caught to examine were Cabbage White, Common/Orange Sulphur, Monarch, Great Spangled Fritillary, Common Wood Nymph, Eyed Brown, Eastern Tailed Blue, Red Admiral, Black Dash Skipper, Delaware Skipper, Dun Skipper, and a Northern Broken Dash Skipper. We also saw a banded or coral hairstreak, but forgot to record which one it was.

The IBMN website has some pictures, taken by Donna Motherway, of Doug Taron discussing the Black Dash Skipper. This particular skipper seemed to like Doug and his nose, and didn't want to leave after he took it out of the jar.

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**Annual Indoor
Workshop
March 5th, 2005**

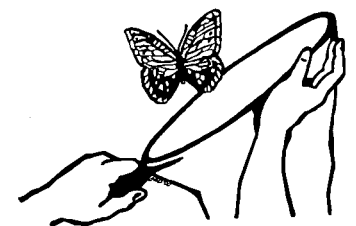
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CALL FOR DATA!!! DEADLINE OCTOBER 15TH

It's time once again to submit your butterfly monitoring data. You can mail in your field forms or enter them through our website. To submit by mail, simply send in copies of all your field forms to Mel Manner at 41W039 Bowes Bend Dr, Elgin IL 60123-8325. If you have never submitted a sketch of your route, please send that in as well.

The website submission option is quite easy and saves Mel and Doug many, many hours of work, so please try it if you have internet capability. To enter data online, go to our website at www.bfly.org and look under Data Entry and Viewing/Enter Data. A simple form, very similar to our Field Form will come up. You just fill in the boxes and use the drop-down menus. Then make sure and hit submit at the bottom and wait for it to submit. If you need instructions, you can open them in a separate window by clicking on Data Entry and Viewing/Instructions. You can then keep this window open while entering data and switch between the instructions and the form as needed. Many of our monitors have already commented on how quick and easy this is. Email Webmaster Jim Peterson at www.bfly.org with any questions.

McGuire Center opens in Florida - Information sent in by Carol Saunders, Waterfall Glen monitor

Come face-to-face with exotic, vibrant butterflies fluttering atop a lush tropical canvas of foliage and flowers as you experience the Butterfly Rainforest, the Florida Museum of Natural History's newest permanent exhibit. The screened vivarium houses subtropical and tropical plants and trees to support 55 to 65 different species and hundreds of free-flying butterflies. Guests can stroll through the Butterfly Rainforest on a winding path and relax to the sounds of cascading waterfalls year-round.

Inside, the McGuire Center public exhibits gallery showcases the "Wall of Wings," which captures the eye with thousands of preserved and photographed butterfly and moth specimens. The wall is a stunning tribute to the research and collections mission of the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity. Also, for the first time at the Florida Museum, visitors will be able to get a close-up view of scientists at work in the world's largest research facility devoted to Lepidoptera.

Find out more at <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/butterflies/>

Judy Istock Butterfly Haven at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

The Judy Istock Butterfly Haven includes a 28-foot tall greenhouse aflutter with butterflies from around the world! Experience butterflies from 7 countries including: Costa Rica, Malaysia and Kenya, as well as butterflies from right here in the USA. Adjacent to the greenhouse are interactive graphics that encourage visitors to learn about the lifecycles, migration, and behavior of one of nature's most magical creatures. Mounted specimens are also displayed with a magnifier to help you study the markings. In addition, the Museum is home to the only breeding lab of its kind in North America. For more information, call 773-755-5100 or go to www.naturemuseum.org.

Butterfly Garden at Brookfield Zoo - Information sent in by Amy Bodwell, Waterfall Glen monitor

IBMN monitor, Amy Bodwell, manages the butterfly exhibit at Brookfield Zoo. This is a temporary exhibit, consisting of a netted enclosure with beautiful garden plantings and free-flying butterflies. The walkway is designed to get you up close and personal to the butterflies. The exhibit is still open until September 12th, then on nice weekends after that as long as they have animals. As of August 25th, they have a good number of crimson patch butterflies, *Chlosyne janais*. It's the first time they've ever displayed them. They are just found in Texas. They are a 1.5-2 inch wingspan butterfly with distinctive red patch on upper hindwing and white spots on forewing. Quite a dandy looking animal, according to Amy.

Monitoring Vernacular (or "Run, Route and Season")

To distinguish between the path you walk and a visit to your site, we now have standardized the terms "run" and "route". A route is the set path that you walk each time you go to your site. A run is an individual visit to your site to monitor. Therefore, you do a minimum of 6 runs of your route each season.

A "season" is defined as the growing season each year. So we have one monitoring season each year from late April through mid-September with the required monitoring period being June 1st through August 7th.

Why doesn't the season match our required time period? Some people are on sites with unusual species that fly outside that time period. IL Beach State Park has the Olympia Marblewings and the Hoary Elfins which can fly as early as the last weekend in April. Burlington Prairie has the Purplish Coppers, which are often still flying on September 15th. So monitors at these two sites, and few other sites, are required to monitor outside the typical period to catch these rare species. Therefore the term "season" refers to the entire growing season.

Newsletter Contributions Always Welcome

If you have something you'd like to contribute, contact Mel Manner.

Digital Cameras and Butterfly Photography

By Tom Peterson, Nelson Lake Marsh monitor and Fermilab Coordinator

Editor's Note: Some of Tom's photography can be seen at <http://tdpc02.fnal.gov/peterson/tom/Butterflies/FermilabButterflyTable.html>

My interest in photographing butterflies began as a means of documenting sightings, to verify for myself as well as to prove to others that I was seeing what I claimed to see. Also, it satisfied my urge to take something back with me from a field trip, to review those sightings of a special butterfly. But when I first saw full-screen images of butterflies showing the fine hairs on the wing edges, striped antennae, multi-faceted eyes, and the mosaic of colored scales, I was hooked by the amazing capability of the camera to bring these beautiful details of the insect world to my computer screen. What I describe below are not methods to get professional caliber, calendar-quality photos. But fairly easy-to-use "point and shoot" digital cameras can provide amazingly sharp photos, great for on-screen viewing and fine prints as large as 5x7 or even 8x10.

The camera. Filling the frame, filling the entire field of view of the camera, with a butterfly in sharp focus is the key to getting the kind of striking photo that shows the fine details such as individual hairs and scales. Thus, we need a camera that can either focus while only a few inches away, or has a lens that allows us to zoom in very close while standing several feet away. This means good close-up, or "macro" performance. Some cameras have features for attaching a macro lens, while others (especially the smaller "point-and-shoot" cameras) may just have a "macro" setting, which typically requires being very close to the butterfly.

Aside from good macro performance, camera selection is largely a matter of personal preference. Most of my butterfly photos were taken with a Nikon 885, a compact digital camera. I want to carry my camera all the time on field trips, so I put a high premium on portability combined with good close-up capability. The advantage of portability is that the camera is always on my belt or in my pocket, letting me take advantage of unexpected opportunities. Many compact digital cameras today provide both small size and good close-up, automatic focusing. A disadvantage of the very compact camera is that, lacking a true macro lens, I must get very close to the butterflies, just a few inches away. Although my camera focuses well up close, depth of focus at such close range is not very great, so I need a view perpendicular to the butterfly's wings, ideally with wings spread flat, in order to have the entire wing surface in focus. The built-in flash is not effective at such close range, so I rely on natural lighting. See the "digital editing" section below for comments about how many megapixels one needs.

There are many excellent on-line resources about digital cameras, including <http://www.dpreview.com/>, <http://www.imaging-resource.com/>, and <http://www.steves-digicams.com/>. The sample photos and test information in these websites can help you find cameras with good macro performance and help you select among various other features such as color quality.

Approaching and photographing butterflies. Finding and approaching butterflies is a large part of the challenge in photographing them. My goal, like that of probably most nature photographers, is to photograph free, unrestrained butterflies.

Some tips:

1. Move very slowly when within 10 feet of the butterfly, and be very patient. Quick motion or disturbing the plant on which it rests will frighten a butterfly away. One's shadow may frighten the butterfly. It usually takes many attempted approaches to get a good photo, and often we do not get those second and third chances.
2. A cool, sunny day, a time in the morning when the butterfly is warming itself, or an extremely attractive nectar source can provide relatively tame butterflies.
3. Don't spend too much time following very active butterflies. If a butterfly always flies away when I approach, and it is not a rare species, I give it up and look for a more cooperative subject. Some individuals within the same species, whether due to circumstances or just individual behavioral differences, are much more tame than others.
4. In some cases, such as Gray Commas, the butterfly returns to a favorite perch, so one need not even follow. One can just wait for it to come back.
5. Have the camera preset for the approximate distance and exposure, if it has or requires such adjustments, so you can quickly "point and shoot".
6. Although I do not use flash for close-up photos, sun is not necessary. In fact, hazy or cloudy days can provide more even, diffuse lighting, and reduce problems due to shadows and reflections on the wings. However, on a dark day or in the woods, the longer exposure time required can result in less sharp focus due to motion of the hand-held camera.
7. As you move in toward a butterfly, take a series of photos starting rather far away. The goal is to fill the entire camera field of view with the butterfly. But you never know how close will be your last chance. If it flies away before you get the perfect pose and shot, at least you have some photos which may not be bad after cropping.

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Digital editing. Digital cameras allow some nice manipulation of photos on the computer. I use Microsoft Photo Editor and Corel PhotoPaint, which came free with my computer and printer. The program iPhoto on Macintosh computers is good, and software comes with most cameras. The two most important functions of the photo software for adjusting butterfly photos are cropping and resizing. Cropping cuts away part of the photo from the sides, top, and/or bottom. I almost always do some cropping in order to center the butterfly and frame the photo symmetrically. Resizing (typically jpeg compression) reduces the file size of the photo by removing some of the redundant information in the photo, like where there are areas of all the same color, effectively making some of the "pixels" larger. Some fine detail, such as at edges, is lost in resizing.

For e-mail or web display, crop and/or reduce the photo size to about 500 or 600 pixels in the longest direction. (The photo editor lets you see the size in terms of pixels.) This will still nearly fill a screen but be reasonably fast for downloading. Thus, the photo size for viewing on screen is only about 400 x 600 pixels, or about 240,000 pixels, 0.24 megapixels. Even a 2 megapixel camera provides much more than that size.

A camera with more megapixels allows larger prints and also more severe cropping for on-screen display. For example, cropping a 3 megapixel photo with a butterfly which is only a small part of the photo can leave one with a 400 x 600 pixel image completely filled by the butterfly. This is the same as the "digital zoom" feature within some cameras; it is not really "zooming in" but rather just cropping away the edges and viewing part of the photo. (Thus, "digital zoom" is not a very useful feature in a camera, in my opinion. I prefer to "digitally zoom" by cropping the photo on the computer.) For printing, we need most of the original photo size, since "pixels" on a print are much smaller than on screen. I have found 3 megapixels, with the camera set for the highest quality (least compressed) jpeg files, to be quite adequate for 5x7 prints (when not much cropping was required) and for sharp photos on-screen.

Binoculars - Contributed By Bill Plankis, Camp Sagawau monitor

More people in the butterfly world are using binoculars in addition to, or instead of, netting thanks to the surge in development of close-focusing binoculars. www.binoculars.com has information on many brands. Bill sent in this email about his new pair.

"I just bought myself a pair of close focusing binoculars, Bushnell Legend 8 X 32 binoculars, model 13-3208, on EBay and thought I would pass along my experience. I get a clear, sharp view of an object within 4 feet. These normally sell for about \$300, but I found a pair for \$150 on EBay. The vendor was AM Best Buy, Scott Jones, ambestbuy@cox.net, an excellent company to do business with. The binoculars are a bit heavy, but solidly built and the viewing performance is great."



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