



# The Antenna

News and Information from the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network

## Onsite Overview: Ferson Creek Fen

Ferson Creek Fen is located in Kane County approximately 2 miles north of downtown St. Charles. The fen is an Illinois Nature Preserve managed by the St. Charles park district. The preserve covers about 40 acres. Restoration work by Nature Conservancy Volunteers began about 15 years ago and has produced good results. Julie Long, the current Butterfly Monitor has been involved in restoring and monitoring at Ferson Creek Fen since the start of the restoration effort. Julie's interest in nature began as a child under the influence of her Grandmother, who was a nature writer. Her father included Julie in many outdoor activities such as bird identification walks. Julie began collecting butterflies as a young person and displayed them in boxes built by her grandfather. Part of her original collection is now placed with the Illinois Master Gardener insect Collection. Julie earned her Biology degree from Miami University. She has continued her education by completing the Naturalist Certificate Program through the Morton Arboretum. It was at the Arboretum she took a class taught by Doug Taron and connected with Mel Manner, who encouraged her to become the Butterfly Monitor at Ferson Creek Fen.

Some of the areas included in Julie's 2 mile route are Fen, Upland Prairie and small sections of Flood Plains. All the areas are being restored. Floodplains restoration includes cutting back non-native species such as Buckthorn. Restoration of the Fen involves removing Purple Loosestrife. Recently beetles known to destroy loosestrife were released to help eliminate the noxious weed. The Upland Prairie restoration process involves cutting back non-native Elms, Sumacs, shrubs and other non-native trees. This year there was a successful burn. Much of the prairie has been planted with a variety of grasses and forbs. Butterfly weed is plentiful and Julie has spotted Coral Hairstreaks frequently visiting the plants. Other species seen in the prairie area include Giant Swallowtail, Tiger and Black Swallowtail. Snout Butterflies and Great Spangled Fritillary are also spotted there. Julie is pleased to say every year is a bit different and that keeps things interesting.

The Fen is sometimes flooded by the waters of the nearby Fox River. Julie's route follows the boardwalks built over the wetland. She does get off the walk (with permission) for netting and jarring. Stepping off the walk has occasionally put her in the precarious position of being stuck in the mud and having to plop down to pull her boots out, but its worth the struggle. She has spotted Dion and Black dash Skippers, as well as Least Skippers. Her Eyed Brown count was the highest listed one year. Historically the Baltimore Checkerspot has been in the area. The host plant Turtlehead can be found but Julie has yet to spot the butterfly. Throughout her years monitoring Ferson Creek Fen she has spotted a total of 34 different species of Butterfly.

Julie also monitors frogs and birds at the site. She has seen Prothonotary Warblers nesting in the wetlands. Willow Fly Catchers and Yellow Throated Vireos area also in the area. The love of nature continues as part of Julie's family legacy. As a young girl her daughter assisted Julie as a frog monitor. They found Spring Peepers in 1993 where they had not been recorded in Kane County. Both of Julie's daughters now have careers in Biology and outdoor Education. Keep up the good work and influence Julie!

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### **BMN Volunteers Sought to Assist with Prairie Monitoring**

Interested in applying your butterfly ID skills as an "on call" expert at prairie monitoring sites? Prairie Watch, the prairie monitoring component of the Illinois Eco Watch Network, is looking for a few BMN volunteers interested in assisting PW volunteers in monitoring butterflies at their site. The butterfly monitoring component of PW is similar to BMN procedures, but is much more scaled down. Interested BMN volunteers should call or email PW Coordinator Pete Jackson at 888-428-0362 or [pjackson@dnrmail.state.il.us](mailto:pjackson@dnrmail.state.il.us).

### **Beginners Field Experience**

Mel Manner will lead this training tour at Bluff Spring Fen in Elgin on Sat., June 14th from 1 PM to 3 PM. This training is for new people who would like to get in the field with an "expert". Mel will cover setting routes, walking routes, and netting. This is a good chance for beginners to ask any and all questions about monitoring. This is not an identification workshop, as only a few species will be flying. For identification workshops, see the Nelson Lake Marsh Skipper Outing and the Outdoor Field Experience. Registration is required. Contact Mel at [manner@foxvalley.net](mailto:manner@foxvalley.net) or 847-464-4426. She will give you directions to the Fen when you register.

### **Skipper Outing at Nelson Lake**

Tom Peterson will lead this outdoor training workshop at Nelson Lake Marsh to find and identify 5 or more common skippers. This class is directed towards beginning and intermediate monitors.

We hope to see Dion, Black Dash, Peck's, Least, and European Skippers. If we're lucky we will also find Broadwing and Delaware Skippers. The walking is somewhat difficult, so those with limited mobility may want to pass. We will be in the marsh, so footwear and pants that can get wet is highly recommended.

The workshop is on July 12th starting at 10 AM. Nelson Lake Marsh (now called Dick Young Forest Preserve) is located just west of Batavia in Kane County. The tour will last about 2 to 2 1/2 hours depending on how many species are flying. If the weather is nice, we will have a picnic for anyone who is interested at the end of the tour. This session is limited to 20 people. We will try to have enough leaders under Tom to split up into small groups of 5 people as needed. Reservations are required.

Call or email Mel to sign up.

### **Governing Committee Forming**

A committee was formed to create a framework for our new website. That worked so well that we are now hoping to form a Governing Committee. The purpose would be to take on tasks such as organizing site tours, picnics, photography workshops, network publications, or anything else that the committee thinks would benefit the network. Mel would act as the chairperson for the first year to get things started. The Committee could also organize subcommittees to take on small, short-term projects such as organizing the annual workshop or editing the Butterfly Galleries on the website.

This is your network, so please get involved and help make it strong. As the network grows, Mel and Doug will be less able to do anything other than handle the flow of data. If a group of people divide projects up into small tasks, no one person will have to devote more than a few hours a month, yet the results will be a more active, cohesive network. If interested, please contact Mel.

### **Database Password Reminder**

To enter data online, you need a special password. If you used a password last year, it is the same one this year. If you never got a password, email Doug Taron at [dtaron@chias.org](mailto:dtaron@chias.org) to get one. Specify your name, site name, and email address. At over 100 sites, we expect more than 600 individual data sheets to be submitted, so please help Doug and Mel out by entering data online if possible.

### **Data Entry Tips**

When entering your data online, please enter the date as mm/dd/yyyy, for example 07/01/2003. You must enter the full year or the computer will assume you mean 1903, not 2003. Also please use military time for your start and stop times. This means use a 24 hour clock, so 1 pm is 13:00, 2 pm is 14:00, and 3 pm is 15:00. Anything before 1 is the same as usual. When entering your temperature, add F at the end, like 80 F.

### **Annual Reports Columns**

Many new people have asked Mel about the columns in the annual reports. Here are the definitions.

#### **Species Summary Definitions**

**# of Sites** is the number of sites on which a given species was recorded.

**High Count** is the highest count of that species on any given day. If you saw 3 monarchs one run, 5 the next run, and 2 the third run, your high count would be 5.

**Site with High Count** is the site with the highest high count in the network for a given species.

**High Count Date** is the date on which the high count was recorded.

#### **Site Summary Definitions**

**# of visits** is the number of times the monitor ran the route on a given site that year.

**2001 Species** should have been 2002 Species. This is the total species seen on a given site in 2002.

**Total Species** is the total number of species seen in the lifetime of monitoring on a given site. Many species are not seen every year on a site, so the yearly count is usually lower than the Total Species count.

**# of High Counts** is the number of different network high counts for a given site. If there is a tie between two or more sites, the one closest to the beginning of the alphabet is listed.

### **Brookfield Zoo's Butterflies are Back!**

Brookfield Zoo's butterfly exhibit will be returning on 24 May 2003 for its third year. It will remain open through mid September. The 86ft x 36ft x 17ft seasonal exhibit features all North American species, several of which can be found in our region, lots of nectar plants for thirsty butterflies, and interesting graphics. A new sign introduces visitors to butterflies farmers, the folks that supply the zoo with pupae. The cost is \$2.50 for adults (\$2.00 for zoo members) and \$1.50 for kids (\$1.00 for zoo members). The exhibit is open 9:30am to 5:30pm daily except Sundays in July when it will remain open until 7pm.

### **New Name for Old Butterfly?**

The American Painted Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) is a real mouthful to say every time you want to distinguish this species from the Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*), or should I say the other Painted Lady. There is too much confusion between these two. So we are adopting the naming convention of NABA (North American Butterfly Association), and simply calling it the American Lady from now on.

### **Copy of Field Form**

Mel has enclosed a copy of the 2003 version of the field form. It is the latest copy with all the Latin names listed correctly. (Unfortunately, it still lists American Painted Lady instead of American Lady.) Please use this version from now on. If you are receiving the electronic newsletter, the field form is available on the website for downloading. Data can also be entered directly online through the IBMN website.

### **Electronic Newsletter Available**

Our newsletters are now available on the web, including previous issues that you may have missed. If you are reading a paper version of this newsletter, but you want to receive an electronic version, thereby saving paper, printing costs and postage, send Mel an email at [manner@foxvalley.net](mailto:manner@foxvalley.net) stating "electronic newsletter", your name, and your email address. She will send you a notice of confirmation.

## **West Chicago Prairie - July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM**

This year's outdoor field experience workshop is at West Chicago Prairie along the western edge of DuPage County. Our monitor Charles Gasparon regularly sees an array of skippers at this time. We're hoping to see Black Dash, Dion, and Broadwing Skippers, as well as Bronze Coppers. Doug Taron will be leading the tour. Hopefully Charles will be able to join us as well. This is a great chance for more advanced monitors to get out in the field together, and a terrific opportunity for beginners to pick up some tips from the "old-timers."

**REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!!! - Call or email Mel at 847-464-4426 or [manner@foxvalley.net](mailto:manner@foxvalley.net)** Make sure to bring plenty of water. Old shoes or short boots and long pants are strongly recommended.

Directions: Meet in the Main Parking Lot.

From the north: Go south on Rt 59, past North Avenue (Rt 64). Turn right (west) at Hawthorne Lane. In about 2 miles, turn left (south) on Industrial Drive. In a little less than a mile, there is a sign on the left marking the main entrance.

From the south and east: Take Roosevelt Rd (Rt 38) west, past Rt 59, and past Fabyan Parkway. Turn right (north) at Kress Rd and go over the railroad bridge. Turn right (east) on Downs. At the end of Downs, turn left (north), and look for the main entrance on the right.

### **IBMN Website Has New Home**

The Chicago Academy of Sciences has graciously offered to host our website for free. As this could cost us more than \$200 a year, this is a very generous gift indeed. Jim Peterson has already moved the site to its new home. We have two new addresses for the site. Either one will get you there. [www.bfly.org](http://www.bfly.org) and [www.butterflymonitoringnetwork.org](http://www.butterflymonitoringnetwork.org). You can download Field Forms, Guidelines and newsletters, plus find lots of other information about butterflies, identification, and links to interesting websites. You can also enter the data entry site from the homepage. Jim continues to upgrade the site and add new items, so check it out often, and send us your comments and suggestions.

### **Time to Monitor**

The new season is upon us. The monitoring period has been extended this year and runs from June 1st through August 7th. Remember that you must monitor a minimum of 6 times, with 4 of them being before July 20th. Many people ask if they are restricted to monitoring only during that time period. The answer is most emphatically, "No!" You are always free to monitor extra times before, during, or after that period as long as you do your 6 minimum runs within those 9 1/2 weeks. A typical schedule could be 2 runs before June 15th, 4 runs between June 15th and July 31st, and 1 run in the first week of August for a total of 7 times. Make sure to completely fill out a field form for each visit to your site, and remember to mail them in as soon as you've finished your season or enter the data online throughout the season. See the other network news items about the Database and Data Entry for more details.

**Have a good summer!!!**

The family Pieridae is a fairly small family in Illinois. Of the thirteen species listed for the state of Illinois, nine are found with some regularity in the northern and central part of the state. As their name implies, whites and sulphurs come in a variety of shades of white and yellow. Most are small to medium butterflies, and most are not strongly patterned.

**The whites.** Only three species of whites are found in northern Illinois: the cabbage white, the checkered white, and the Olympia Marblewing. Of these, the cabbage white is far and away the most common. The spot in the subapical region of the forewing is diagnostic. The checkered white seems to be a more southern species that is only seen occasionally in northern Illinois. The females are heavily marked, but the patterning on the males may be quite faint. The lack of the prominent dot of the cabbage white is diagnostic. The Olympia Marblewing is a highly remnant-reliant species that is found in sand prairies and sand savannas. The greenish marbling on the underside of the hindwings is distinctive, and it has a very brief flight period in April and May. All of the white butterflies in Illinois are roughly the same size, and because the cabbage white is so abundant in so many habitat types, it is a convenient species to learn for the purposes of size comparison. Saying that a butterfly is about the size of a cabbage white is far more informative than describing it as "small" or "medium sized." The size comparison can also be useful for beginners who may be struggling to figure out whether observed species are butterflies or moths. There are many white moths that are smaller than cabbage whites. Locally, all of the white butterflies are about the same size, so anything that is visibly smaller can immediately be concluded to be a moth.

There is considerably more size variation in the sulphurs. The most common of these are the orange sulphur (or alfalfa butterfly) and common (or clouded) sulphurs. Both species are about the size of a cabbage white. The common sulphur is much less orange than the orange sulphur. Both species are agricultural pests, whose larvae have adopted numerous non-native pasture crops, such as clover, as host plants. As a result of this change in host plant availability, the ranges of these two species, formerly geographically isolated from each other, now broadly overlap. Both species now hybridize extensively. Because it can be so difficult to determine whether a given individual is a pure species or a hybrid, the IBMN protocol does not distinguish between the two species. Record them as common/orange sulphurs. For both common and orange sulphurs, a fraction of the females are white, and at a distance resemble cabbage whites. However, they have the dot on the hindwing that is diagnostic of the sulphurs. Monitors should NOT record these separately. In order to avoid confusion, there should be no mention of white vs. yellow forms in submitted data, simply record them as common/orange sulphurs.

The next two sulphurs to consider are the dogface butterfly and the cloudless sulphur. The dogface butterfly is about the same size as common sulphur. The dog's head markings on the upper sides of the forewings are difficult to see in flight and invisible when the butterfly is at rest. You can see more pronounced dark markings on the butterfly as it flies by, and the very pointed apical tip of the forewing is a good field mark for butterflies at rest. The cloudless sulphur is significantly larger than the common sulphur. It lacks the dark borders that the other local species have.

The regions final two sulphurs are both smaller than the common sulphur. Their sizes are the main diagnostics for these species. The little yellow is about the size of a pearl crescent, and a typical sulphur yellow color. The dainty sulphur is smaller still- about the size of an eastern tailed blue. It has darker markings that may be quite faint on both the topside and underside. Both of these species migrate from further south. The little yellow is more common south of the Loop, but has been recorded by butterfly monitors throughout the metropolitan Chicago region. The dainty sulphur is much more common west of here, near the Mississippi River. It turns up only occasionally in IBMN data. Several other sulphur species are listed for Illinois, and contain county records even in the northern part of the state. They are extraordinarily rare in this part of the country.

