



The Antenna

News and Information from the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network

The Drought Paradox

by Doug Taron

As I write this, Illinois is just beginning to exhibit the first tentative signs of possibly emerging from the severe drought that has gripped the state for most of the year. Many of the butterfly monitors have been concerned about the effects of the drought on the butterflies. Oddly enough, the drought has not seemed to hit our local species particularly hard, and some species have actually had very strong years.

This surprising strength of butterfly populations in a drought year is a result of the negative impacts that the drought is having on butterfly pathogens. Most butterfly species experience extremely high mortality in their juvenile stages. It has been estimated that only about 1% of the eggs that are produced result in viably adult butterflies. Much of the mortality of eggs and larvae is not due to more obvious predators like birds, but to attack by bacteria, molds, and fungi. These disease causing organisms do best in cooler, damper weather, and can have an enormous impact on butterfly populations. A comparison of the 2004 and 2005 seasons is instructive. In 2004, there was a cool spring and abundant rain throughout the growing season. Consequences included extremely lush landscape, an excellent year for crops, and an absolutely terrible year for butterflies. In contrast, 2005 has resulted in bumper crops of many species, including great spangled fritillaries, spring azures, and tiger swallowtails. The possibility of a very large monarch migration also exists.

For different reasons, both 2004 and 2005 can be difficult ones to respond to when monitoring. Last year, many people (including myself) complained of the lack of butterflies. This year, though there are plenty of butterflies, the natural areas where we monitor look decidedly stressed- and it's easy to feel concern for the effects on the butterflies. It should be kept in mind that both of the last two seasons have been extreme from a weather standpoint. Both, however, also are still within the range of conditions to be expected periodically here in Illinois. They are part of the new challenges and observations that monitoring brings each year, and allow us to gain a more complete picture of the interplay between the environment and butterfly populations.

What is Puddling?

Butterflies sip minerals from moist soil. This is called "puddling". It is mostly the males who participate in this activity, because it makes their sperm stronger and thus the resulting egg and larva stronger. You can sometimes see 30 or more butterflies puddling in this manner. Those of us who went to the Outdoor Field Experience saw an entire group of Spring Azures puddling.

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**Data Submission
Deadline
October 15th**

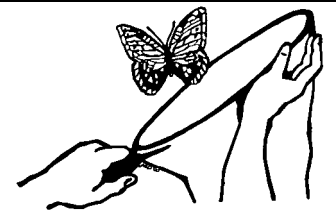
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CALL FOR DATA!!! DEADLINE OCTOBER 15TH

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. You will have several options. If this is your first time, you will probably want to choose Set Default Values. A simple form, very similar to our Field Form will come up. You just fill in the information that never changes from one form to the next, like your name. You can also list species that you see almost every time, like cabbage whites and sulphurs. Then you won't have to enter this each time on a new field form. Make sure to hit Set Defaults at the bottom. Then use your back arrow until you get back to the page with all the choices. Here you can now choose Enter Data. Choose your site name from the list. A field form with your default values comes up. It looks just like the regular field form. Just enter the day's data. Then make sure and hit Send Data at the bottom and wait for it to submit. Once it's submitted, just hit your back arrow again, and hit Restore Defaults to get a new field form for the next day's data. If you need further instructions, you can open them in a separate window by clicking on 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 with any questions. You can contact him at www.bfly.org.

Summer 2005 Workshop Summary

On July 16th at 11 AM, 18 IBMN monitors braved the heat to traipse around Miller Woods near Gary, Indiana looking for the endangered karner blue. It had actually rained that morning, despite the drought covering the mid-west, and it was quite steamy. But everyone was raring to go.

John Drake works for The Nature Conservancy of Indiana and led the tour. He headed us out into a beautiful savanna with lupine growing everywhere. Lupine is the larval host plant of the karner blue. It wasn't very long before we started seeing butterflies. It took a little while to see the first karner, but then we did get to see quite a few, and even a mating pair. Spring azures were also all over the place, so it was good to see both and learn to tell them apart. We were also lucky enough to see an Edward's hairstreak.

Over all, we saw only 13 species close up or in a catch jar, with a few others flying in the distance, mainly great spangled fritillaries and a monarch or two. However, we got to see not only the karner but some other rare butterflies there, and some of us even saw a robber fly snag a male karner blue right out of the air! We also got to see spring azures puddling in one wetland area. There had to be fifty or more. It was quite a site.

For a full report of the day, go to our website and look under Training Workshops/Summary of summer 2005 outdoor workshop.

Butterflying at Iroquois

Contributed by Green River monitor John McKee

With local butterflying seriously curtailed by the drought, on July 17th Cindy and I decided to try our luck at the Iroquois County Conservation Area, southeast of Kankakee. From the little town of St. Anne, we drove about 2 miles south on Route 1 to 3300N. Rd. and took it about 9 miles east to a parking area where it tees with 3000E. Rd.

In this area, we walked south on some of the numerous trails through sandy woods and savannas to the edge of an extensive wet meadow. Many butterflies were seen, especially along the trail following the interface between the woods and the meadow, but the highlight was observing several individuals of both Eyed and Appalachian Browns.

We then drove another mile east to the end of 3300N. Rd. This section of road, along the south edge of the Nature Preserve, was practically swarming with Viceroy's and Meadow Fritillaries and also produced Spicebush Swallowtails, Checkered Whites and a Cloudless Sulphur for our day list.

Returning to 3000E Rd., we took it north 1 mile, along the west border of the Nature Preserve, to 8000S. Rd. (Kankakee County) where we again worked our way east. The north side of this road was full of blooming vervain and beebalm that attracted many butterflies including numerous skippers. Since that side of the road was outside state property, we were able to use our net to study the skippers closely finding that most were Northern Broken-dashes with an occasional Tawny-edged, Crossline, and Dun mixed in.

Since this was our first real exploration of this site, I cannot say if butterflying is always so productive there but its wide variety of extensive and high quality habitats would certainly indicate it could be. In any event, we had a wonderful afternoon, identifying 37 species in about 4 hours of leisurely effort, mostly without using a net and without encountering another human being. We would strongly recommend your checking it out.

Newsletter Contributions Always Welcome

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

Dear IBMN Monitors,

The Habitat Hootenanny is coming up on Sept. 18th. I hope you will be able to attend. It should be quite a party, and it's also a great opportunity to meet other types of monitors and site stewards. We hope to foster a connection between everyone volunteering at natural areas, so that our individual groups are not isolated, but are part of a larger network.

Mel Manner

Come out to the Habitat Hootenanny!

Celebrate autumn and the winding down of another glorious field season with other monitors, stewards, advocates, and friends, at the Chicago Wilderness Habitat Hootenanny. Sunday, Sept. 18, 4-7 pm, at Salt Creek Park in northeastern DuPage County. If you're musically inclined, bring an instrument (and a chair, if you have a favorite) for an impromptu music jam or two. Voices are instruments, too! Bring a dish to share if you like. Drinks, plates, cups, flatware, napkins, and ice provided. Bring kids and family, frisbees and footballs, and games to share with the rest of us.

FEATURED EVENTS:

Stories from the field. Inspiring, funny, outrageous, unusual, or other interesting stories of monitoring, restoring, advocacy, and other work that we do. Contact us to reserve a two-minute time slot to tell your tale, or the tale of a friend: kglennemeier@audubon.org.

Way-Out Wilderness Awards. Nominate a friend (or yourself) for one of the following awards:

Cretin Award for discovering the most bone-headed use of natural land.

Crystal Ball Award for the novice who found the target species before the experts.

Duh Award for taking the longest time to identify the commonest species.

Edison Award for the best improvised solution in the field.

Flat Ear Award for most phone calls made in the service of conservation.

Fool's Award for making the biggest monkey of oneself in public.

Fugitive Award for the most exciting run-in with the law while in the field.

Glow in the dark Award for the most time spent at a computer for conservation.

Hidden Jewel Award for the best unexpected find.

Martyr Award for making the biggest sacrifice to do conservation work.

Oops Award for the worst mis-identification of a species.

Outback Award for getting lost the best and longest.

Paparazzi Award for getting the most media coverage for conservation work.

Pied Piper Award for recruiting the most people to your cause.

Popeye Award for the greatest act of strength in the field.

Spirit Award for the best attitude under the worst conditions.

To Hell and Back Award for getting the most bruised and scraped in the field.

Triple-A Award for the most harrowing vehicle experience.

Tunnel Vision Award for being the most obsessed with a species or taxon.

Twenty-first Century Award for the funniest technology mishap.

Or create your own category for something really weird or entertaining.

Contact us with your nominations: kglennemeier@audubon.org.

Ask the Experts. Experts on stewardship, advocacy, plants, birds, butterflies, herps, and photography will be available for your one-on-one questions about restoration, identification, saving habitat, and more.

Networking and Recruiting. We'll set aside a period for representatives of local organizations to gather and share their groups missions with interested people. No tables, but reps might want to bring a name badge or a sheet of paper to identify their organization. Or bring flyers or business cards to share with each other.

There's More! See next page.

Habitat Hootenanny Continued:

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

What's the big ID? A table with specimens and pictures of various species, with names identified on the reverse side. For people who are excited about the identification skills they learned this summer and want to try them out.

Kids Art Table. Adventures in nature art for kids and parents, led by local educators.

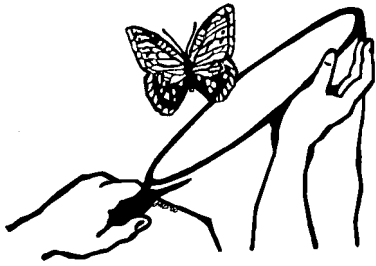
Recycled Treasures. Bring books, field equipment, or other items that you no longer need but that others might appreciate. The table will be open for all to rummage through and find new treasures, regardless of whether you've brought something yourself.

Come Rain or Shine, we'll have shelter.

Sunday, Sept. 18, 4-7 pm. At Salt Creek Park in northeastern DuPage County. Located on the north side of Elizabeth Drive, east of Addison Road and west of Wood Dale Road. Exit I-290 at Rte. 83 and head north to 3rd Ave. (Oak Meadows Rd). Head west, then go north on Wood Dale Road, and west on Elizabeth.

RSVP's appreciated, to Karen Glennemeier at kglennemeier@audubon.org or 847-965-1150 x20. Contact Karen to reserve a time slot for Stories from the Field or Way-Out Wilderness Award nominees.

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