

2017 Eastern Catskills NABA Butterfly Count

This was our 11th annual Eastern Catskills North American Butterfly Association (NABA) Fourth of July Butterfly Count, conducted this year on 24 June, the earliest possible date consistent with surveying on the last Saturday of the month. A brief early morning rain shower gave way to mostly sunny skies with little or no wind and seasonally warm temperatures (72- 82° F), providing exceptionally nice conditions for a butterfly survey that has historically been plagued by inclement weather.

Weather conditions leading up to count day were somewhat cooler and very wet, with only an average of two or three sunny days per week during the month of June. This in stark contrast to last year's prolonged drought and extremely hot temperatures during the same time period. Despite apparently good count day conditions, both diversity and abundance of butterflies was disappointingly low this year. Common Milkweed, a major nectar source and an important butterfly attractant, provided an abundance of fresh flowers at some sites but was just starting to bloom in other areas. All of the utility cuts in the northern sectors had recently been sprayed with herbicide, having little effect on this year's survey, but not boding well for the next generation of butterflies dependent on targeted host plants.

Sixteen observers in five field parties encountered a total of **1,154 individuals** representing **35 adult butterfly species**. For the first time in the history of this survey, we did not encounter any additional unique immature species. Diversity set a new record low, one species less than the 36 we encountered in 2009, well below our ten-year average of 41.9 species/year, and only the third time we failed to record 40 or more species for this annual count. Abundance was also noticeably low, below our ten-year average of 1,404 individuals/year, and our second lowest count overall. Despite the continued loss of one field party and a few traditional target sites no longer receiving any coverage, our collective effort was at or above average due to pleasant weather conditions extending our count times and allowing for better coverage of newer and more productive sites. With that noted, it is also clear that this count circle would benefit from at least one additional field party to do it justice.

No new species were added to the count composite this year, maintaining our cumulative total at 66 species. New record high counts were set for **Hackberry Emperor** (4, eclipsing 3 in 2013 and 2016), **Least Skipper** (178, eclipsing 148 in 2014), and **Peck's Skipper** (22, compared to 11 in 2014). A total of three **Gray Hairstreaks** tied our previous high counts from 2013 and 2015, and one **White Admiral** matched last year's first appearance of this intergrade on our count. Second highest counts were achieved for **Eastern Tiger Swallowtail**, **Spicebush Swallowtail**, and **Viceroy**.

Pearl Crescents and Common Wood-Nymphs were apparently between broods and missed entirely, as were Wild Indigo Duskywings, a species that has been remarkably scarce in our area this year. There were no significant flights of hairstreaks, and Baltimore Checkerspot were noticeably absent or flying in very small numbers at recently productive colonies, with the exception of a good flight at Thorn Preserve in Woodstock. For only the second time in our eleven-year history, we did not record a Delaware Skipper on count day, and once again this year we failed to find any life stage of Giant Swallowtail.

Below is a summary of the count results and field party effort. Thanks to all of the participants for their time and effort. Next year's count will be almost a week later, scheduled for Saturday, **June 30, 2018**, with Sunday 01 July reserved as a rain date. Please mark your calendars and save the dates. – Steve M. Chorvas (Compiler/Coordinator)

Adult Butterflies: Black Swallowtail (9), Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (16), Spicebush Swallowtail (8), "*Dark*" Swallowtail *sp.* (1), Cabbage White (291), Clouded Sulphur (25), Orange Sulphur (4), Banded Hairstreak (5), Gray Hairstreak (3), Eastern Tailed-Blue (32), Summer Azure (7), Great Spangled Fritillary (116), Meadow Fritillary (60), Baltimore Checkerspot (30), Eastern Comma (7), *Anglewing sp.* (1), American Lady (8), Red Admiral (14), Common Buckeye (3), Red-spotted Purple (2), White Admiral (1), Viceroy (4), Hackberry Emperor (4), Northern Pearly-eye (6), Appalachian Brown (1), Little Wood-Satyr (16), Common Ringlet (3), Monarch (20), Silver-spotted Skipper (41), Hoary Edge (9), Northern Cloudywing (10), Least Skipper (178), European Skipper (118), Peck's Skipper (22), Tawny-edged Skipper (2), Northern Broken-Dash (6), Little Glasswing (27), Hobomok Skipper (8), Zabulon Skipper (3), Dun Skipper (1), *Unidentified Grass-Skippers* (32).

Immature Butterflies: Spicebush Swallowtail (5 caterpillars [cats] on Spicebush), American Lady (9 cats on Pearly Everlasting), Viceroy (2 cats on Aspen), Monarch (3 cats on Common Milkweed), Hoary Edge (2 eggs on Tick-trefoil).

Participants, Field Parties and Field Party Effort (Miles on Foot):

Northern Area (1-10) – Steve Chorvas, Alan Beebe, Jim Clinton (08:00 – 20:15, 12.25 hrs., 4 miles)

Northern Area (11-15) – Frank Murphy, Deb Ferguson (10:00 – 17:25, 7.5 hrs., 3.25 miles)

Dutchess Area (1) – Barry Haydasz, Melisa Bohlman, Maha Katnani, Barbara and Ray Mansell (9:00 - 16:30, 7.5 hrs., 3 miles)

Southern Area (1-7) – Mark DeDea, Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (09:30 – 16:10, 6.75 hrs., 2 miles)

Southern Area (11) – Thomas Crepet, Joe Bridges, Donna Seymour (9:00 – 01:30, 4.5 hrs., 3 miles)

Observers: 16 **Field Parties:** 5 **Party-hours:** 38.50 **Party-miles:** 15.25

Weather: AM Sunshine: 76 -100 % **PM Sunshine:** 76 -100 % **Temperature:** 72- 82° F **Wind:** Calm

2017 Eastern Catskills NABA Fourth of July Butterfly Count Photos.



Hoary Edge nectaring on Common Milkweed, Town of Saugerties, June 24, 2017 (Steve M. Chorvas).



Hoary Edge, Town of Saugerties, June 24, 2017 (Steve M. Chorvas).

11th Annual Eastern Catskills NABA Fourth of July Butterfly Count June 24, 2017		Northern										Dutchess					Southern					Southern							
		EBNP	HITS	Bristol Beach SP	Kolar Rd	Great Vly WMA	West Camp Field	Dave Elliott Meadow	Dave Elliott Utility Cut	Dave Elliott Road	Mt. Airy/Hommel PL	Thorn Preserve	Glasco PL	Falling Waters	Saug. Lighthouse	Lauren Tice Fields	Poet's Walk	Jockey Hill	Rte 28 (Onteora Lake)	Onteora Lake	Kingston Reservoir	Hallinan Hill Utility Cut	Fehr Fields	Ulster Landfill	IBM Scenic Hudson				
Total	Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	11					
9	Black Swallowtail	1								1	5	5					3				2	1							
16	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	6			1		1	1	3		3	1	1		1		4	4	3		1	2							
8	Spicebush Swallowtail	3		1				1		1							3	3	1	1				1					
1	"Dark" Swallowtail sp.																							1					
291	Cabbage White	64	1	18	27	12	5		1		92	80		8	4		33	33	75	17		1	6	2	45	4		27	27
25	Clouded Sulphur	1						1			16	11			5		1	1	3						3			4	4
4	Orange Sulphur	1			1						3	3																	
5	Banded Hairstreak	1				1											2	2	2				2						
3	Gray Hairstreak																		2			1	1				1	1	
32	Eastern Tailed-Blue	9		4				4	1		3	3					3	3	13	2	2			1	8		4	4	
7	Summer Azure	3	1		1		1										3	3	1	1									
116	Great Spangled Fritillary	25		1	4		2	3	15		39	36	1	2			30	30	22	8		4	3	5	1	1			
60	Meadow Fritillary	3					3				48	44	4				8	8	1	1									
30	Baltimore Checkerspot										29	29							1				1						
7	Eastern Comma	6	5		1						1			1															
1	Anglewing sp.																		1		1								
8	American Lady	1								1	2	1	1						3	1	1			1				2	2
14	Red Admiral	8	2	1	3	1			1		1			1			2	2	3	1			1		1	1			
3	Common Buckeye	2			1			1											1			1							
2	Red-spotted Purple																1	1	1		1								
1	White Admiral	1				1																							
4	Viceroy	2			2														2						2				
4	Hackberry Emperor	4			3	1																							
6	Northern Pearly-eye	6	5			1																							
1	Appalachian Brown	1	1																										
16	Little Wood-Satyr	9	4		4			1			1			1			3	3										3	3
3	Common Ringlet	1		1													1	1	1					1					
20	Monarch	4			1				3		9	8			1		6	6	1					1					
41	Silver-spotted Skipper	15	1	2	8	2		1	1								19	19	5		2			1	2		2	2	
9	Hoary Edge	9			1				7	1																			
10	Northern Cloudywing	5			1				4								3	3	2	1			1						
178	Least Skipper	87	51	1	10	1	9	7	4	3	1	19	4	15			32	32	35	10		1		1	23			5	5
118	European Skipper										1	1					10	10	107	50			3	54					
22	Peck's Skipper	4	2		1			1			1			1					17	1					16				

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		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13	14	15		1			1	2	3	4	5	6	7									11		
Total	Species																																						
2	Tawny-edged Skipper													2	2																								
6	Northern Broken-Dash	3			1				2												2	2		1						1									
27	Little Glassywing	8	2		1		2	1	2												8	8		8	7						1					3	3		
8	Hobomok Skipper	4	1				1	2															4						4										
3	Zabulon Skipper																				3	3																	
1	Dun Skipper																				1	1																	
1	"Witch" sp.													1			1																						
31	Skipper sp.													31	31																								
1,154	Total Individuals	297	76	24	70	23	18	17	22	42		5		307	259	1	32	2	13		178	178		319	101	5	9	11	21	163	9					53	53		
35	Total Species	31												17							22			28													10		

Immature Butterfly Species	Egg(s)	Caterpillar(s)	Pupa(s)	On (plant/surface)	Location(s)
Spicebush Swallowtail		5		Spicebush	Northern – Dave Elliott Meadow
American Lady		9		Pearly Everlasting	Northern – Malden Gardens (6), D. Elliott PL North (3)
Viceroy		2		Aspen	Northern – Hom. PL
Monarch		3		Common Milkweed	Northern – D. Elliott PL North
Hoary Edge	2			Tick-trefoil	Northern – Dave Elliott Powerline North

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Notes: **New High Count:** Hackberry Emperor (3 in 2013 and 2016), Least Skipper (148 in 2014), Peck's Skipper (11 in 2014). **High Count:** Gray Hairstreak (tied 2013 and 2015), White Admiral (tied 2016). Second highest count for Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, and Viceroy.