
CHRYSALIS

The Occasional Newsletter of the Vermont Butterfly Survey

July 2002

Vol. 1 No. 2

This is the second issue of CHRYSALIS, an irregular e-mail newsletter about the Vermont Butterfly Survey. You're getting this because you have signed on as a VBS volunteer. We'll be using CHRYSALIS to report on the progress of the survey and to offer advice to participants. If you'd rather not receive this newsletter, please reply to this e-mail and let us know.

Thanks for joining the survey.

Bryan Pfeiffer

VBS Field Staff and Newsletter Editor

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1. VBS PERMITS (FOR STATE AND FEDERAL LANDS) ARE NOW AVAILABLE

The Vermont Butterfly Survey has finally obtained its permits allowing participants to visit and survey on state and federal lands. If you survey or intend to survey on state or federal property, please email the VBS office (vbs@vinsweb.org or 802-457-2779 Ext. 124) and we'll send you a copy of the permit. It would be wise to carry it with you on public lands.

The VBS permit gives you access to most (not all) Vermont wildlife management areas, state parks, and state forest land, as well as the Green Mountain National Forest. If you wish to survey on US Fish and Wildlife Service land, such as the Conte National Wildlife Refuge or Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, you must first obtain permission from refuge managers. We hope to have permits for these areas beginning next year.

2. PRIORITY BLOCKS vs. NON-PRIORITY BLOCKS

Some VBS participants believe they should survey only in priority blocks, and that data from other blocks is not of use to the project. This isn't true. ANY RELIABLE DATA ON ANY BUTTERFLY IN VERMONT -- WHETHER IT'S FROM A PRIORITY BLOCK OR NOT -- HAS TREMENDOUS VALUE TO THE PROJECT. Please understand that the priority blocks only represent the MINIMUM AREA in which we need to survey in order to complete the project. That doesn't mean data obtained from other blocks is no good. It actually has equal value to data obtained from within a priority block. If you have the option, it's nice to survey within a priority block. But it is far from mandatory. If you have a favorite spot for butterflies, and it doesn't happen to fall within a priority block, please feel free to survey there.

In some cases -- around Montpelier, for example - VBS has more participants

than priority blocks. So Montpelier-area volunteers can contribute just as well by surveying outside of a priority block in the region. Please contact Bryan Pfeiffer (Bryan@VermontBirdTours.com or 454-1874) if you've got questions about where to survey in the Montpelier area or the central part of the state.

3. SWALLOWTAILS, CRESCENTS AND OTHER PUZZLES

As we all know, life (especially insect life) isn't always as exact or distinct as we might like it to be. That's certainly true for butterfly species. The taxonomy of certain species (Tiger Swallowtails, Crescents, Azures) is far from final. Even Jeff Glassburg, in his "Butterflies Through Binoculars" (as well as other noted lepidopterists) recognizes, for example, the difficulty in distinguishing Pearl Crescent from Northern Crescent (or even if they are indeed two species).

So what's a VBS participant to do when asked to name a species on a Voucher Data Card or Site Visit Form? If you're uncertain about a species, feel free to list it in data forms as simply "Tiger Swallowtail Species" or "Crescent Species," for example. If you're uncertain about a species you've vouchered, you can leave the name blank. VBS staff or national experts will review every piece of voucher data for the project. Indeed, your work, your vouchers, may help sort out the taxonomy of some confusing species. You will be sent a list of everything you sent to us with the determined names each winter.

4. FOURTH OF JULY BUTTERFLY COUNTS

Help count butterflies in a nationwide census. This weekend marks the beginning of the count season in Vermont. Like Christmas Bird Counts, these butterfly counts are part citizen-science, part social event. Your results will be sent to the North American Butterfly Association and compiled with data from across the country. The VBS staff has been so busy in the field that we haven't been able to compile information on every count, but check out <http://www.uvm.edu/~vbap/events.htm#4th> for a list of counts and people to contact.

5. WINGTIPS - ADVICE FOR THE FIELD

This is a regular newsletter feature offering field advice to volunteers. If you've developed something that makes your survey work easier, please forward the suggestion to Bryan Pfeiffer (Bryan@VermontBirdTours.com). We'll include it in the next issue and give you credit.

- Photograph Your Site Visit Form -

Photographers can add a level of accuracy and order to their data by first shooting a picture of the upper portion of their Site Visit Forms before actually surveying and photographing butterflies at the site. In that way, every shot on the roll after the site visit form can be matched later to that particular site visit.

- Net, Photograph, and Release -

VBS volunteers who would rather not take voucher specimens, can opt to photograph butterflies "in the hand." Most any butterfly can be carefully removed from a net, photographed and released. This does take some practice and can be difficult to impossible with skippers and other small species.

But, in general, once it is in the net, manipulate the butterfly so that its wings are folded above the thorax. One way to stabilize a butterfly in that position, is to "sandwich" it between two layers of netting. You can

even hold secure a butterfly flattened in place in the netting without direct pressure on the specimen. Simply spread your fingers wider than the butterfly and hold the netting taught and flat around it. Then slide your flat- or spatula-tipped forceps (or stamp tongs) into the net and grasp ALL FOUR folded wings of the butterfly across the stiff costa (leading edge) not far from the thorax. Make sure you haven't grabbed any netting as well. Carefully remove the butterfly, snap its photograph and release.

6. DON'T FORGET THE VBS E-MAIL DISCUSSION GROUP

One way to stay in contact with the survey and its participants is the VBS e-mail discussion group. By joining the group you can get up-to-date news of butterfly sightings, post your own sightings, ask questions, get answers, hear about field trips, and discuss butterfly conservation. We also hope participants will use the e-mail group to ask general questions about the survey. To sign up visit <http://list.uvm.edu/archives/vtleps.html>.

7. FEATURED WEB SITE:

We are hardly the only ongoing butterfly survey in the United States. With Connecticut just finished, Massachusetts completed from 1986-1990, and Maine just starting, Vermont will contribute to a broad regional atlas of New England butterflies.

Here are some other atlas projects in other places.

<http://www.msu.edu/user/kriegelr/mls/>

<http://www.ohiolepidopterists.org/>

<http://george.peabody.yale.edu/cbap/>

<http://www.ent.orst.edu/osac/butterdat.html>

<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/bnm/index.html>

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/bflyusa.htm>

9. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fourth of July Butterfly Counts Join novice and expert butterflyers alike for the annual Fourth of July Butterfly Count. We'll count every butterfly we see as part of a nationwide effort sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association.

North Montpelier Count

July 6

For more information contact Chip Darmstadt at 229-6206 or cdarmstadt@vinsweb.org.

West Rutland Count

July 7

For more information contact Alan Gregory at 570-788-1425 or meg5@psu.edu or alangregory@standardspeaker.com

Mt. Snow Count

July 27

For more information contact Jackie Parker at 732-349-1285 or jackiep@shorenetworks.com

Danby-Tinmouth Count

July 6

For more information contact Phillip Ballou at 802-446-2172 or 297 Route 140 Tinmouth, VT 05772-1104.

Ferrisburgh Count

Date To Be Announced

For more information contact Margaret Dye, 115 South Maple Street,
Vergennes, VT 05491 or 877-3011.

Sentinel Rock State Park Count

July 20

For more information contact Annie Brueck, PO Box 220 E. Charleston, VT
05833 or annie@vtlc.org.

VBS Trainings

Morrisville

July 12 / 1-3 pm

Join Chip Darmstadt of the VINS North Branch Nature Center for a training
on VBS survey technique and field forms. This will be held at the Lamoille
County Nature Center (<http://www.pwshift.com/lcnature/>). Call (802)
888-9218 for details.

Manchester

July 20 / 11am

Join Kent McFarland for a VBS field trip and some training on VBS
surveying. Contact Susan Morgan at 802-362-7783 for details.
