
CHRYSALIS

The Occasional Newsletter of the Vermont Butterfly Survey

October 2003

Vol. 2 No. 3

This is the fall 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 use CHRYSALIS to report on the progress of the survey and to offer advice to participants. (The next winter issue will be a pdf version with photos.) If you'd rather not receive this newsletter, please reply to this e-mail and let us know. Thanks for joining the survey and participating in another great field season.

Kent McFarland and Bryan Pfeiffer

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1. DATA DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 15

Don't be a data deadbeat. We need your survey data no later than November 15. We've already begun entering thousands of your butterfly encounters into the VBS database. And when we're done, we expect to have double the volume of data this year compared to last year. Consult your VBS manual for details on data submission. One reminder for those of you submitting digital photos: Remember to use the VBS voucher number as the name of your digital photo. Please do not add a prefix or a suffix to the file name. For example, use simply 5678.jpg (rather than Number5678.jpg or #5678.jpg). If you are submitting more than one digital photo for a particular voucher, name them 5678a.jpg, 5678b.jpg, etc.

2. SEASON SUMMARY

In spite of some rainy weather, the 2003 field season proved that VBS is gaining momentum. We're expecting the volume of data this year to be more than double that of last year, close to 10,000 new records. Our corps of survey volunteers has grown to 176. We also had help this season from Ainsley Close and Ryan Gamble, Middlebury College students. They were able to cover nearly 30 blocks that had not been visited in 2002. In total, survey volunteers adopted more than 130 blocks this year.

We'll send out a more complete seasonal summary (with photos!) before the start of the next field season. But, in the meantime, here are a few highlights:

The 2003 field season produced the first hard evidence of two new species for Vermont: Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) and Tawny Emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*). Kevin Hemeon vouchered the swallowtail in Bennington County. Prior to that, the species was represented in Vermont by a single and reliable sight record from noted lepidopterist Paul Opler. (We'll have more on Kevin's swallowtail in the next issue of *Chrysalis*.) On a similar note, Vermont's first photo of a Tawny Emperor came from two New York butterflyers visiting Vermont on August 19. Tom Fiore and Kristine Wallstrom spotted and photographed the Emperor in floodplain forest along the Winooski River in Richmond. (VBS volunteers Larry and Sherry Berrin captured, released and expertly described -- but did not photograph -- a Tawny Emperor last year. See the article below for details.)

This was a decidedly off year for Orange Sulphurs (*Colias eurytheme*), perhaps owing to the cold winter. Kent McFarland, investigating West Virginia Whites (*Pieris virginianensis*) now suspect the species is locally common in wooded stream and valleys in southwestern Vermont, but we'll certainly be looking for additional data in coming years to learn more about this southerner's range and northward extent in Vermont. Scott Morrical and Bryan Pfeiffer separately discovered new sites for Olive (Juniper) Hairstreak (*Callophrys gryneus*), one in Chittenden County and the other in Rutland County, suggesting that this handsome butterfly ranges north to south throughout the Champlain lowlands. Jim Chace discovered what may be a new site for Jutta Arctic (*Oeneis jutta*) in Lamoille County. Also of note was Scott Griggs' discovery of a Columbine Duskywing (*Erynnis lucilius*) on the summit of Snake Mountain on May 25.

Finally, Vermont enjoyed a massive Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) migration this fall, the best since the legendary flight of 1997 (perhaps even better). The Champlain Valley was center stage for the migration. While most observers reported normal flights in other physiographic regions, elated Champlain Valley butterflyers were at times overwhelmed with Monarchs. One group tagged 215 Monarchs in a single clover field in Shelburne on September 27. Overall, several hundred Monarchs were tagged in the Champlain Valley this fall, raising substantially the odds of at least one being recovered outside the state. To date, only one Monarch tagged in Vermont has been recovered on wintering grounds in Mexico. That could change this winter. For more on the Monarch migration, consult www.monarchwatch.org.

3. TACKLING THE TAWNY EMPEROR

It was a typical morning during Tom Fiore and Kristine Wallstrom's Vermont vacation. The two New York residents were visiting the Winooski River in Richmond, searching for dragonflies, butterflies, and tiger beetles. After walking a bit through floodplain forest, they arrived at a muddy bank on the river, where Tom spied a puddling Tawny Emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*). Kristine grabbed a few photos.

Those photos came in handy. Tom and Kristine provided the state's first hard evidence of this dashing butterfly. It's an exciting find for the Vermont Butterfly Survey. The discovery, on August 19, is perhaps a bit overdue. This butterfly's host plant, hackberry, grows in the Champlain Valley and lower sections of the Winooski River. In fact, VBS volunteers Sherry and Larry Berrin discovered a Hackberry Emperor in Colchester during survey work in the summer of 2002. They took no specimen or photograph, but wrote an excellent description of their find. Their sight-record went into the VBS database. And now Kristine's photos offer the unequivocal proof. Both encounters represent records at the northern edge of this species' range, which stretches as far south as southern Mexico.

James A. Scott reports in his fine book "The Butterflies of North America" that Tawny Emperor females seem to prefer mature trees in grove lining streams and rivers. So volunteers and staff at Vermont Butterfly Survey will be searching high and low next year along the Winooski and other sites with hackberry for Tawny Emperor, as well as its congener, Hackberry Emperor, *A. celtis*.

4. BUTTERFLY SORTING BONANZA - JANUARY 10

Mark your calendar for the premier Vermont butterfly event of the winter. We need your help to sort and identify butterfly specimens at the University of Vermont. There's a vast and rich collection of pinned specimens in the Zadock Thompson Natural History Collection at UVM. It represents critical historic data for VBS. But many specimens collected by students over the years remain unorganized and unidentified. So we're planning a day-long sorting and identification event. Working with specimens is a great opportunity to enhance your field skills. As we sort and identify, we'll be entering what we find into the VBS database. No matter what your level of interest, there will be plenty to do (not to mention refreshments and lively conversation). Plus, you'll get a tour of the amazing insect collection at UVM. We expect that the event will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; so folks can come and go as they please. We'll be offering more details as the event approaches.

5. WINTER BUTTERFLYING, ANYONE?

Cure the winter butterflying blues with -- what else? -- live butterflies. We're hoping to organize a winter trip to either a butterfly house in Jamaica (Vermont) or Montreal. It would be a great chance to meet other VBS volunteers in the good company of live butterflies in flight. We need to know if there's demand to warrant such a trip. So let us know if you're interested.

6. VIRTUAL BUTTERFLIES

Status of Butterflies in Mass. <http://mrines.com/Butterflies/Status/>

Butterflies of North Carolina (great photos)

<http://www.rlephoto.com/butterflies/butterflies.html>

Butterflies of Canada http://www.cbif.gc.ca/spp_pages/butterflies/index_e.php

The Butterflies of Nova Scotia <http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/~aa095/NSLeps/>

7. BUTTERFLY BOOK OF THE MONTH

Le Guide des Papillons du Quebec (yes, it is in French)
<http://www.broquet.qc.ca/nature2.html>

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