
CHRYSALIS

The Occasional Newsletter of the Vermont Butterfly Survey

May 2005

Vol. 4 No. 1

Here's another 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. If you'd rather not receive this newsletter, please reply to this e-mail and asked to be removed from the mailing list. Thanks for joining the survey.

Kent McFarland and Bryan Pfeiffer

Contents:

1. Let The 2005 Season Begin!
 2. You, Your Block(s) and VBS
 3. Have You Left VBS?
 4. VBS Training Sessions/Workshops
 5. How to Find a First State Record – by Kevin Hemeon
 6. Tracking VBS Volunteer Time Helps with Funding!
 7. Web Page Pick of the Month
 8. New Caterpillar Identification Books
 9. Permits
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1. LET THE 2005 SEASON BEGIN!

In spite of the soggy April, Mustard White, Spring Azure, Henry's Elfin, Eastern Pine Elfin, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Compton Tortoiseshell and Mourning Cloak are among the jewels already flying in Vermont. So it's time to focus your brain on the coming 2005 flight season.

Don't fret if you haven't gotten out for butterflies just yet. Odds are you've already vouchered much of what's already flying. (Of course, that Henry's Elfin, discovered by Kevin Hemeon recently in Dummerston, proves that it's never too early to find first state records.)

We've only got two seasons left in VBS. So we really need to make the best of our efforts in 2005 and 2006. If for some

reason you haven't received your packet of materials for the coming season, let us know ASAP. Which brings us to ...

2. YOU, YOUR BLOCK(S) AND VBS

In our letter to participants this year, we're asking volunteers to take on new blocks. Any block with 45 or so species vouchered is considered complete. Within a week or so, we'll have all VBS data up to date and available on the web site. You'll be able to check your block for the total species. Even if you haven't quite reached 45 species -- if your block has more than 35 species -- it would be great if you could shift to another one (while trying to mop up in your current block).

Soon after the data is posted to the web site, we'll be contacting each of you directly about your block -- whether you'd like to continue surveying there and where else you might be able to turn your attention. We're not trying to pressure you (well, actually, we are -- just a bit), but we need a good sense of what kind of effort we can expect this year. So stay tuned.

3. HAVE YOU LEFT VBS?

If you don't think you'll be able to do any more survey work, PLEASE take a few minutes to gather and return any of your unused voucher cards and glassine envelopes. We need them back. You can mail them to:

Kent McFarland
Vermont Institute of Natural Science
27023 Church Hill Road
Woodstock, VT 05091

Thanks.

4. VBS TRAINING/WORKSHOPS

Learn butterflies and polish your VBS sampling skills during workshops this spring. They're a great excuse to get out and chase butterflies with interesting people. We'll cover everything from forms to photography. Don't forget to bring your net, camera, binoculars, field forms, GPS unit, maps and questions. VBS lepidopterist Bryan Pfeiffer will lead two outings:

June 4 - Montpelier / 10 am to 1 pm

June 5 – Island Pond / 10 am to 1 pm (good birding as well)

NOTE: These trips will only happen if enough people register in advance. You can do so by emailing Bryan at bpfeiffer@vinsweb.org.

5. HOW TO FIND A FIRST STATE RECORD

By Kevin “Sweet Nectar” Hemeon

Dreaming of finding that rare, or as yet, unfound species this year? Take the time to learn how to ID that butterfly’s favorite larval host plant. Many of my butterfly “hunts” start with scouting for patches of larval food plants. The beauty is you can do this on rainy, cloudy days when butterflying is unproductive.

Some suggestions would be: 1. Lupines. Host for Frosted Elfins and Persius Duskywing. 2. Bearberry. Host for Hoary Elfins. No Bearberry? Try Trailing Arbutus. 3. Oak woodlands might produce White M Haistreaks, as well as, Sleepy, Horace’s and Mottled Duskywings. 4. Showy Trefoil. Host for Hoary Edge and Southern Cloudywing. 5. Black Spruce. Host for Bog Elfins. (Bryan would be very jealous).

Some of the rarest butterflies to date are wetland dwellers. Black Dash was a state record up to this survey, yet were found in more sites this past season when more wetlands with swamp milkweed were investigated in Bennington County. How far north does their range extend? Hopefully some surveyors in hip boots will find out. Other species to be on the lookout for while your feet are wet include Mulberrywings, Dion and Broadwing Skippers, and Bog Coppers.

These are just a few of my suggestions, but if there’s a butterfly YOU’RE dying to see, maybe you should start by looking for a plant.

6. TRACKING YOUR VBS VOLUNTEER TIME HELPS FUNDING!

The State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program provides federal dollars to every state to support conservation aimed at preventing fish and wildlife populations from declining and

avoiding potential listing under state or federal Endangered Species Acts. Congress created the program in 2001. Funds appropriated under the State Wildlife Grants program are allocated to the states according to a formula that takes into account each state's size and population. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is responsible for the administration of SWG funds in Vermont.

In order to make the best use of the State Wildlife Grants program, Congress charged each state and territory with developing a statewide Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). These strategies will provide an essential foundation for the future of wildlife conservation and a stimulus to engage the states, federal agencies and other conservation partners to strategically think about their individual and coordinated roles in prioritizing conservation efforts in each state and territory.

VBS has already contributed key butterfly information to this plan to help determine which species are of concern. Here are the species that will be highlighted in the document:

Wetland species

Bog copper (*Lycaena epixanthe*)
Jutta arctic (*Oeneis jutta*)
Dion skipper (*Euphyes dion*)
Black dash (*Euphyes conspicua*)
Two-spotted skipper (*Euphyes bimacula*)
Mulberry wing (*Poanes massasoit*)
Broad-winged skipper (*Poanes viator*)

Grassland species

Cobweb skipper (*Hesperia metea*)
Persius duskywing (*Erynnis persius*)
Regal fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*) extirpated
Dusted Skipper (*Atrytonopsis hianna*)

Woodland species

West Virginia white (*Pieris virginianensis*)
Early hairstreak (*Erora laeta*)
Hackberry emperor (*Asterocampa celtis*)
Tawny emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*)
Edwards' hairstreak (*Satyrium edwardsii*)

A major portion of VBS funding is through a State Wildlife Grant. This is federal funding annually appropriated to each

state for non-game wildlife research and conservation. This grant is a 3:1 matching grant. In other words, we have to provide one dollar for every three federal dollars. The matching portion can be private grants and donations or in-kind donations such as the volunteer work that you do for this project.

For this upcoming field season we provided a form for each person to track their volunteer time to help us meet our match. You received this in your participant packet in April. There has been a small change on this form. **The volunteer has to record time and mileage for each day and NOT summed for each week as stated on the form.**

For more information about SWG, please visit the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department web page at http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/SWG_Grants.cfm and http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/SWG_CWCS.cfm

7. WEB PAGE PICK OF THE MONTH

<http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabambc/butterfly-info.asp>

The Massachusetts Butterfly Club's photos and information page is a bookmark we use all the time. It shows nice photos of each species and key information such as flight times and habitat. You can even compare two species side by side. As a bonus, on the lower right side is a small photo of a butterfly and you can guess what it is and then mouse over it and see the answer. If you hit page refresh the photo changes to something else. What a great way to learn on a rainy day!

8. NEW CATERPILLAR IDENTIFICATION BOOKS

A Field Guide to Caterpillars (Butterflies Through Binoculars Series.)

by Thomas J. Allen, James P. Brock, Jeffrey Glassberg
Oxford University Press
Due out on May 1

Caterpillars are as varied, fascinating, and often as colorful as the adult butterflies they become. This is the most comprehensive guide to these creatures available. It contains all the information necessary to find and identify the caterpillars of North America -- from Two-tailed Swallowtails,

some of the largest butterfly caterpillars at just over two inches when fully grown -- to tiny Western Pygmy-Blues. Caterpillar seekers will learn how to distinguish between butterfly caterpillars and moth caterpillars, where and how to find caterpillars, and the visual differences between young and older caterpillars. Each species section describes how to identify the caterpillar, complete with brilliant photos -- many published here for the first time. To make for easy field use, each caterpillar's key physical features, abundance, habitat, and major hostplants are listed on the same page as its photo. The book also contains a special section on butterfly gardening, offering valuable information on how to set up a butterfly garden and raise healthy butterfly caterpillars, and provides a thorough list of the plants butterflies most like to feast on.

Caterpillars of Eastern North America : A Guide to Identification and Natural History (Princeton Field Guides)

by David L. Wagner Princeton University Press

Due out on Aug. 1

This lavishly illustrated guide will enable you to identify the caterpillars of nearly 700 butterflies and moths found east of the Mississippi. The more than 1,200 color photographs and two dozen line drawings include numerous exceptionally striking images. The giant silk moths, tiger moths, and many other species covered include forest pests, common garden guests, economically important species, and of course, the Mescal Worm and Mexican Jumping Bean caterpillars. Full-page species accounts cover almost 400 species, with up to six images per species including an image of the adult plus succinct text with information on distribution, seasonal activity, foodplants, and life history. These accounts are generously complemented with additional images of earlier instars, closely related species, noteworthy behaviors, and other intriguing aspects of caterpillar biology.

Many caterpillars are illustrated here for the first time. Dozens of new foodplant records are presented and erroneous records are corrected. The book provides considerable information on the distribution, biology, and taxonomy of caterpillars beyond that available in other popular works on Eastern butterflies and moths. The introductory chapter covers caterpillar structure, life cycles, rearing, natural enemies, photography, and conservation. The section titled "Caterpillar Projects" will be of special interest to educators.

9. VBS Permits

We have official permits for conducting VBS surveys on most state lands, including state parks, forests and wildlife management areas. Volunteers are not permitted to survey on Mt. Mansfield State Forest, Camel's Hump State Forest, Worcester Range or Daniel's Notch. If you need a copy of the state permit, please let us know. Volunteers do NOT have official permits to work on any Nature Conservancy lands or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges. Volunteers can survey on any Green Mountain National Forest lands.