

NABA Chapter News: Massachusetts Butterfly Club

by Steve Moore

The Massachusetts Butterfly Club was organized in the early 1990s following the completion of the Massachusetts butterfly survey under the leadership of Brian Cassie. It became a chapter of NABA in January, 1995. Currently there are about 130 members.

The MBC maintains a website at www.massbutterflies.org which contains significant information for those interested in Massachusetts butterflies. Included are descriptions of the butterflies seen in the state (together with excellent photos of each species taken by MBC members), a list of scheduled

MBC walks (27 in 2011), all 16 July 4 Counts, butterfly gardening advice, mowing guidelines for land conservation and other landowners, and helpful links. The website has been well maintained by MBC members Dale Rhoda and Karl Barry.

The Club holds two scheduled meetings each year in the Spring and Fall at which we have speakers on butterfly related topics, a member's pictures presentation at the Spring meeting, an auction to help finance the Club's activities and a social hour with a potluck dinner.



Club members looking at an Early Hairstreak on Mt. Greylock in western Massachusetts are, from left, Josh Rose (brown hat), Barbara Volkle (blue shirt), Wendy Miller (green shirt), Dolores Price (in background), Ron Hamburger (kneeling with camera), Karl Barry (face in shadow), and Dave Amadio from NJ (standing with camera) Photo credit: Sue Cloutier



Tom Gagnon of Florence, MA (the long time Vice President--West of the MBC) maintains two gardens at the Northampton Community Gardens in Northampton, MA which are planted with a purple verbena that attracts many butterflies, including the unusual White M Hairstreak and Common Checkered Skipper. The Club runs trips there in the Fall each year. Photo credit: Bill Benner

The MBC produces several publications, all of which are available for sale on the website. These include *A Guide to Good Butterfly Sites in Massachusetts*, a detailed pocket checklist of the 100 species of butterflies seen in the state which includes flight times, abundance, overwintering status and the general portion of the state where they fly, and a journal published semiannually. Each member receives a free checklist and the journal. The journal includes articles by members and others as well as the annual records report which appears for each year in the following Spring edition. The journal has been produced over the years under the excellent leadership of Sharon Stichter.

The Club maintains statistics with respect to all the sightings reported in the state. The records go back to 1992 and have been made available to researchers and other interested parties. These records have been maintained over the years by MBC members Tom Dodd, Erik Nielsen and Mark Fairbrother.

The Club furnishes advice to land conservation organizations, landowners and garden clubs through the efforts of several of its members including Madeline Champagne, Sharon Stichter and Brian Cassie. These important activities include lectures at meetings and advice rendered at site locations with respect to improving habitat for butterflies.

Club trips begin in April and continue through the Fall. In recent years, trips have included out-of-state ventures to Maine, New Hampshire, and West Virginia. A trip to Arizona was held before the 2008 NABA meeting in California.

A brief rundown of club trips:

- Our opening walk in early April for commas, Mourning Cloaks and tortoiseshells is particularly well attended.
- Trips are held in May to the southeast portion of the state for Elfin and other early species
- The Memorial Day weekend trips look for Bog Elfin, Early Hairstreak (nine seen in 2011) and Hessel's Hairstreak.
- In early July we see many species of hairstreaks (including the rare Oak Hairstreak) and Dion Skipper.
- By August we look for the Zabulon Skipper and Tawny and Hackberry Emperors (including a much anticipated ice cream stop).
- September trips for Bronze Copper and other Fall strays.
- Annual Fall trips to Tom Gagnon's gardens in the Northampton Community Gardens

Steve Moore is currently President of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club



Gray Hairstreak on Culver's Root, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, in Bill Benner's gardens in West Whately, MA. Bill is the former President of the MBC. Photo credit: Bill Benner.