

MASSACHUSETTS  
BUTTERFLIES

No. 9

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"MASSACHUSETTS BUTTERFLIES" is the semi-annual publication of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club, a chapter of the North American Butterfly Association. Membership in NABA-MBC brings you "American Butterflies," "Butterfly Garden News," "Massachusetts Butterflies," and all of the benefits of the association and the club, including regular meetings and an extensive list of field trips. Regular annual dues are \$25.00 Those joining NABA-MBC for the first time should make their check payable to "NABA" and send it to our treasurer, Lyn Lovell, at the address listed below. Membership renewals are handled through the national office [ NABA 4 Delaware Road Morrystown, NJ 07960 ]

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SUBMISSIONS : We encourage all members to contribute to "Massachusetts Butterflies." Please send your notes, articles, butterfly records, and illustrations to Brian Cassie at the above address by the following deadlines : July 31 for the late summer issue and December 15 for the winter issue. Please send in all yearly records by November 30.

## The Great Richard Forster

by Brian Cassie

I first met Richard Forster twenty-four years ago. Over the years since 1973, Richard and I went from casual acquaintances to pretty good pals. We talked quite a lot over the phone, mostly about butterflies and other insects, Christmas Bird Counts, what we thought about the speakers at the Nuttall Ornithological Club, and other nature-related things. I didn't know anything about Dick's politics, but I did know he really wanted to see a Spoon-billed Sandpiper more than just about anything. He just loved discovering things and he hoped someday to discover that crazy looking Asian sandpiper right here in Massachusetts. He would have. He discovered a whole lot of exciting birds, butterflies, and dragonflies in his life and he was on his way to discovering many more when his enthusiasm for shoveling snow caught up with him this April. The blizzard of April 1 claimed the life of one of the best guys around.

No one in the Massachusetts Butterfly Club felt stronger about gathering and sharing information than Richard Forster. He was a meticulous record keeper and was always on me to publish more articles on unusual species, good butterfly areas, or simply the results of field trips conducted by the club. As you know, he contributed some very fine butterfly articles to this publication. Who is going to write them now?

My greatest regret is that I never actually went into the field with Richard. He was a legendary field observer, supremely gifted, but for all the gabbing we did over the years, over the phone and in person, I never got around to asking him if he ever wanted a companion for a day. I wish I had.

A lot of people said Dick had great luck in the field, just happening to be at such and such a place the moment a rare bird or insect arrived. Luck had nothing to do with it - it was paying attention to details of weather and migration and being alert for the possibilities that made Dick's record of great discoveries so enviable.

The single greatest lesson we can learn from the life of Richard Forster is to get involved. Don't let others make all of the discoveries. There are enough to go around for everyone.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THANKYOU

To Richard Hildreth, for your article on butterfly count timing and especially for faxing it to us all the way from Thailand so it could make this issue.

### CONGRATULATIONS

To Tom and Cathy Dodd, who were married in July. They are two wonderful people who really deserve each other. We wish you all the best.

## Your Most Wanted Butterflies

by Brian Cassie

Tom Gagnon and Dottie Case are psyched for butterflies. When they see a new butterfly in their western Mass. hangouts, they always check out its status and if it is unusual they give me a call to share their excitement. Tom and Dottie have called me this year about sightings of Hickory Hairstreak, Hackberry and Tawny Emperors and Zabulon Skipper. Now, these are all very difficult butterflies to stumble across in this state. Naturally, a butterfly does not have to be outrageously rare to inspire us, but I wondered which species that they have not yet seen in Massachusetts would some members most want to find here. Several phone conversations later, I had the "Most Wanted" lists of some seasoned MBC members. Here are the butterflies some of your butterfly watching colleagues would most like to see up-close-and-personal for the first time, along with my comments on their chances. By the way, they all picked different things.

Pipevine Swallowtail This beautiful butterfly is so erratic in the state that I would say it is just plain lucky to find one. It can show up anywhere. If we ever set up a butterfly hotline, this would get on to more people's lists.

Checkered White All of our really unusual migrant butterflies in Massachusetts come up from the South. The best bet for seeing this species is to keep your ear to the Internet and see what's flying up into New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. If there are Checkered Whites on the move [not very likely], get down to Westport or the Cape and check out the whites.

Mustard/WV White Mustard Whites are much harder to find than West Virginia Whites, but to see either you have to be in western Mass. Try Canoe Meadows WLS in Pittsfield for the Mustard White [spring or summer] and Mt. Greylock for the West Virginia White [spring only].

Pink-edged Sulphur Since only one Pink-edged Sulphur has ever been identified in Massachusetts, the chances of finding one are almost nil. The only hope is to check out all the Clouded Sulphurs along our northern border. Talk about a needle in a haystack!

Silvery Blue This would have been an impossibility even a few short years ago, but now there are probably thousands of Silvery Blues resident within our borders. There are always a few in the beautiful Lupine fields in Gloucester, but lots more in Adams and Stowe. Remember to look for them in June.

Harvester In my experience, it is much easier to find the larva than the adult, but to look for either get yourself to a brook or

pond with alders growing along the edge. If you search the stems and find the white fluffy masses of Woolly Aphids that sometimes infest alders, you have an excellent chance of seeing the caterpillars and an o.k. chance of seeing the butterfly. When there are no aphids around, it is virtually impossible to locate Harvesters. They can and probably do occur in almost all Commonwealth towns.

Hickory Hairstreak This butterfly is as mysterious as a resident species gets. Several MBCer's saw their first ever in Mass. this year, which I guess was some sort of banner year for the species. It is almost never reported and I do not know where to look for it.

Common Buckeye Buckeyes regularly wander north in late summer and occasionally get here earlier and increase in numbers as the season progresses. This year there are quite a lot of Buckeyes being seen all around the state. If you want to see one, walk a powerline or some other gravelly area with herbaceous growth around. Buckeyes like to bask on the ground and do not visit flowers with much consistency.

Milbert's Tortoiseshell This is my favorite butterfly, but where have all the Milbert Tortoiseshells gone? I have so few reports in recent years that I am starting to worry. The species is mostly found in northern and western Massachusetts. Does anyone have a good locale?

Long-tailed Skipper Gardens along the coast and in the Connecticut River Valley are the places to check for this species in the fall. In the fall of 1996, after we found one on the September Cape Ann trip, I thought I would drive down to my favorite nursery in South Dartmouth and look for a Long-tailed Skipper on the butterfly bushes. There it was!

Common Checkered Skipper A real long shot. Call Edna Dunbar in Pittsfield and ask her if she has found any lately. We have only one site for the species in Massachusetts in the last 30 years, the Pittsfield Community Gardens.

Brazilian Skipper This is an even longer shot and cannot reasonably be expected to occur more than once every fifty years or so. Please call me when you see one. Call collect.

Zabulon Skipper This Hobomok Skipper look-alike sometimes establishes itself in the Springfield-Longmeadow area. MBC members Dottie Case and Tom Gagnon found it this summer.

**Food for Thought** : Would you say you have seen a species in Massachusetts in you have seen the caterpillar only? I say yes; after all, it is the species, just the growth stage instead of the breeding stage. Ok ?

## A Look at the 1997 4th of July Butterfly Counts

Summer butterfly counts are great fun. We encourage all of you to partake of one or a few next year. They often provide us with some of our most memorable field experiences of the year. Rank amateurs and experts alike join in the fun [or frenzy]. You should, too.

I am guessing that there were ten counts in Massachusetts this year. Five counts got their data into us so that we could share it with you; the others apparently forgot about our publishing deadline - C' mon guys.

**So. Berkshire County** [compiler : Rene Laubach] July 19 - Cool, windy weather and a 1-2 week late butterfly season made count day less than optimal, but Renee and his gang nonetheless did a fine job on their sixth annual count. The outstanding butterfly of the count was Bronze Copper, with two observed. Eyed Brown [28] and Monarch [81] were found in impressive numbers.

**No. Worcester County** [ compiler : Gail Howe] July 13 - Two years in the 4JBC circuit and on both years this count had the greatest number of species - 51 this time around. Highlights included 146 Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, 641 American Coppers, a Hickory Hairstreak, 127 Monarchs, 218 Silver-spotted Skippers, and an Atlantis Fritillary [our eastern most record in MA].

**Concord** [compiler : Richard Walton] July 12 - Richard always gets lots of good observers out into his count circle and this year they found 46 species, including a Bronze Copper, a first-ever Hickory Hairstreak, one of the few Painted Ladies in the state this year, and 110 Monarchs, a nine-year high. A Coyote pup was probably the non-lepidopterological highlight.

**Foxboro** [compiler : Brian Cassie] July 6 - Of the 50 species observed, one was new to the count [Common Buckeye] and twelve occurred in record high numbers, with 852 Baltimore Checkerspots, 105 American Ladies, 4 Northern Cloudywing, 8 Southern Cludywings, and 4800 European Skippers. See Richard Hildreth's accompanying article on the Foxboro 4JBC.

**Outer Cape Cod** [compiler : Jackie Sones] July 12 - The newest 4JBC in Massachusetts made its inaugural run on a beautiful day and the eight participants found 34 species from Wellfleet to Provincetown. The butterfly garden at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary was swarming with skippers and the privets and Everlasting Peas at Horton's Campground were great for both skippers and nymphalids, including a Common Buckeye. Four species of hairstreaks were one of the highlights.

## A Sad State of Affairs in Easton

by Brian Cassie

A couple of years ago, Tom Dodd suggested at an MBC meeting that we should write up our favorite butterfly sites, with species and directions, and try to accumulate a series of these reports so that we might bind them together into a butterfly finding booklet. I have tramped around in a pretty fair number of sites in Massachusetts and since I write at least something down from each of my field trips, I went through my notes to find some data for these reports.

I decided my first such paper would have to be on Bay Road, Easton, a premier butterfly spot in eastern Massachusetts. I first visited the area by chance August 27, 1990. Since southeastern Mass. was undergoing one of its periodical Eastern Equine Encephalitis panics and a three county aerial broadcast spraying was scheduled for the next day, I thought it might be worthwhile to survey an area of powerline before and after the spraying. Bay Road in Easton looked good and it was - 21 species of butterflies, including 6 Common Buckeyes. Two days later, under identical conditions, there were 3 species of butterflies left. These first two visits would set a pattern for the area : great promise thwarted by the ugly hand of man.

The lands surrounding the powerlines in this area were great for butterflies from 1990 to 1996. The habitats include a Red Maple swamp, its Sweet Pepperbush flowers attracting late summer butterflies. In 1993, the first and only colony of White M Hairstreaks ever found in this state resided here. Tom and I counted 16 White M's here one day, as well as Striped, Acadian, Banded, and Gray hairstreaks the same afternoon. The edges of the area were excellent spots to find Spicebush Swallowtails and Appalachian Browns. We found up to 11 of each on occasion. Walk across the road and into a large dry meadow filled with daisies and clovers and you would invariably find great numbers of Common Ringlets, Baltimore Checkerspots, and skippers galore in season. An adjacent wet meadow held a colony of Silver-bordered Fritillaries and outstanding numbers of Least Skippers and Leonard's Skippers. In another marshy area a few hundred yards further along the powerline, I once counted 211 Black Dashes, all crowding on to the brilliant fluorides of Swamp Milkweed. The herbaceous and woody growth immediately next to the path running under the powerline supported a nice colony of Harris' Checkerspots and more Viceroy's than you could find anywhere, as well as numbers of Luna, Cecropia, Polyphemus, and Promethea moths.

This was a great place. I brought Jeff Glassberg, president of NABA here. I showed the area to a producer from WGBH and made a butterfly video here for another firm. When I wanted to find caterpillars of Harvesters devouring Woolly Aphids, watch Mourning Cloaks laying eggs on willow saplings, or delight in Silver-bordered Fritillaries and Harris' and Baltimore checkerspots simultaneously dancing about the meadow grasses, I came here.

Late in 1993, the first houses went up on the woodland side of Bay Road. There are 34 there now. You will look in vain, as I have, for Spicebush Swallowtails. Since April of last year, the dry meadow has been completely plowed to oblivion, with two houses thus far and more to come. There are no more Swamp Milkweeds for the Black Dashes and Mulberry Wings and wildflower lovers, just brush piles growing larger by the month.

On September 4, 1996, on my 38th visit to the site, I found eight fellows decked out in plastic backpacks and huge fogging sprayers inundating the entire powerline with herbicides. They made the journey all the way from western Massachusetts just to add insult to injury. On my 39th visit, March 30, 1997, I collected two handfuls of *Promethea* and *Cecropia* cocoons from the saplings along the path. Nothing ever emerged from any of them. On my 40th Easton trip, the woman that owns the last remaining field that is good for Baltimore Checkerspots, so good in fact that there were thousands and thousands of caterpillars there in mid-June at the time of my visit, said that she was going to build houses there as soon as she could get clearance. I asked her if I could remove some of the checkerspot caterpillars to a safer environment. She said I could not.

Today, August 10, 1997, I have made my last visit to Bay Road, Easton. On August 14, 1995, my young students at Thayer Academy counted 140 larval webs of Baltimore Checkerspots here; today there were none in the same field. The White-topped Asters that should be home to Harris' Checkerspot larvae have been sprayed to death, taking the checkerspot colony along with them. All of the cherry, willow, and aspen saplings are dead brown sticks.

I have contacted the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program, the Easton Conservation Commission, the "Patriot Ledger", and the "Brockton Enterprise" over the past few years to try to get any of them interested in saving this marvelously diverse habitat. The Heritage people were the only ones to respond but they could not visit the site. Now I have to contact Tom Dodd and tell him to file the Easton report under "H" for horrendous.

## **Who Says You Need to Visit a Sanctuary to see Butterflies?**

Early this August, your editor, along with a broken down school bus, its driver, and nine young campers headed to Berkshire County, spent two hours on the side of the Mass. Pike, 2.5 miles east of the Sturbridge exit. With nothing else to do and time to kill, we took a walk of about 400 yards along the highway's edge and looked around for insects. What we found were a dozen species of butterflies, including a Gray Hairstreak, a Common Buckeye, 3 Common Sootywings, and a Red-spotted Purple laying eggs on the tips of Quaking Aspen leaves. On milkweeds we saw two Monarch caterpillars and 14 eggs. While I do not recommend the breakdown experience to anyone, it does serve to show that butterflies are ubiquitous. You may find some great ones right around the corner from your house.

## Timing is Everything

by Richard Hildreth

Summer in eastern Massachusetts usually features two peaks of butterfly abundance, one in early June and another sometime in July. The NABA Fourth of July Butterfly Counts are most often scheduled to count the butterflies during the July peak when they are usually the most abundant.

This summer, on July 6, I participated in the Foxboro 4JBC, as I almost always do (I have missed only one of the six Foxboro counts, when I was away in Madagascar in 1995). I covered my traditional territory, the eastern part of Mansfield, east of Rte. I-495. I counted only 185 butterflies of 23 species, a pretty sparse list. Expected species such as Pearl Crescent, Common Wood Nymph, Wild Indigo Duskywing, and Mulberry Wing were absent altogether.

After pondering a bit about the sparseness of my list, I had the thought that possibly many of the traditional "July" butterflies had not emerged by July 6; that the season might be somewhat retarded. I decided to go out and cover my area in East Mansfield again, sometime later in July, to see if some of the missing species had emerged. On July 27, three weeks after the Foxboro count, I spent the day in Mansfield visiting the same sites I had visited on the 6th, count day. This time I counted 439 butterflies of 31 species. Figure 1 shows the butterfly lists from both of my trips. Sure enough, the missing species were flying in good numbers on the 27th; e.g., Common Wood Nymph, with zero on count day and 41 three weeks later. It appears that the 1997 season, with regard to adult butterfly activity, seems to be retarded.

I examined the data from all six years of the Foxboro 4JBC, looking for clues about timing : retarded vs. advanced seasons and the abundance and variety of butterflies counted. I looked at several categories of butterflies, the presence or absence of which might tell me something about the status of the season. I looked at the "early" skippers, those that emerge in June and might be present in July if the season were retarded enough. I looked at the "late" skippers, those which typically emerge in July and which might be absent if the season were retarded enough and common if the season were advanced. I also looked at several species which are normally conspicuous and numerous in July and might be absent in a retarded season and abundant in an advanced season. Finally, I also looked at the Baltimore Checkerspot, a species that could be very common in early July in a retarded season and much less so in an advanced season. All this data is given in Figure 2.

It appears that in the six years of the Foxboro count, there have been three retarded years - 1992, 1996, and 1997. The years 1993-1995 appear to have been advanced seasons. In the retarded seasons, early skippers and Baltimore Checkerspot were abundant; American Copper, Pearl Crescent, Common Wood Nymph, Wild Indigo Duskywing, and late skippers were scarce. In the advanced seasons the reverse was

the case.

Figure 3 shows some interesting characteristics of the retarded and the advanced seasons. During the retarded seasons, when all of the July butterflies had not yet emerged and some June butterflies were still present, more individual butterflies were flying but there were fewer species and the top six species made up a very large percentage of the total butterflies counted. During the advanced seasons, when the June butterflies were mostly absent and the July butterflies had fully emerged, there were fewer individual butterflies, more species, and the top six species made up a smaller percentage of the total butterflies counted.

For those observers with the time to spend, a great exercise would be to do your section of the Foxboro (or any other count) a week or two before and a week or two after the count, as well as on count day, using the same route and amount of effort, etc. Be sure to share your data.

Figure 1 - Butterflies Observed in East Mansfield, July 1997

	July 6	July 27
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	3	3
Spicebush Swallowtail	0	1
Cabbage White	9	1
Clouded Sulphur	8	4
Orange Sulphur	0	1
American Copper	4	27
Bog Copper	2	3
Banded Hairstreak	2	1
Striped Hairstreak	1	3
Gray Hairstreak	0	5
Coral Hairstreak	0	4
Eastern Tailed-Blue	1	7
Summer Azure	0	1
Great Spangled Fritillary	7	1
Pearl Crescent	0	220
Baltimore Checkerspot	1	0
American Lady	13	5
Common Buckeye	0	3
Red-spotted Purple	1	2
Viceroy	1	6
Little Wood Satyr	2	5
Common Ringlet	0	1
Common Wood Nymph	0	41
Monarch	1	0
Silver-spotted Skipper	11	14
Northern Cloudywing	2	0
Horace's Duskywing	0	1
Wild Indigo Duskywing	0	20

European Skipper	111	0
Peck's Skipper	0	1
Crossline Skipper	1	26
Long Dash	1	0
Northern Broken Dash	0	3
Little Glassywing	1	0
Delaware Skipper	1	1
Mulberry Wing	0	2
Dun Skipper	1	26

Figure 2 - Various Butterfly Species' Numbers in Retarded and Advanced Years

	Retarded			Advanced		
	1992	1996	1997	1993	1994	1995
Baltimore Ch.	456	639	852	84	94	151
Cloudywings	1	1	12	2	1	1
Indian Skipper	0	2	1	0	0	0
Hobomok Sk.	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hoary Edge	0	3	7	3	0	1
European Sk.	192	3900	4800	73	35	254
Am. Copper	51	1185	61	226	309	314
Pearl Crescent	2	6	1	63	404	2
Wood Nymph	116	88	12	1364	687	214
Wild Indigo D.	0	0	0	1	27	1
Dun Skipper	2	8	6	41	68	20
Black Dash	1	0	2	42	24	5
Mulberry Wing	1	0	0	39	27	18
N.Broken Dash	3	7	10	24	37	8
Crossline Sk.	2	10	7	45	15	17

Figure 3 - Top Six Butterflies as a Percentage of Total Butterflies

Retarded Years [Average 88.6%]	
1992	87.5%
1996	84.4%
1997	93.9%

Advanced Years [Average 67.1%]	
1993	68.7%
1994	67.1%
1995	65.5%

## Notes from the President

### Raising Cecropia Moths

I have collected records from people who raised Cecropia Moths from caterpillars during the 1996-1997 and the results showed a very unusual ratio of emerged males to females. Normally the males outnumber the females, but this year the females greatly outnumbered the males. The data collected from six hatches were 3 males : 14 females; 1 male : 34 females; 1 male : 14 females; 2 males : 10 females; 1 male : 14 females; and 12 males : 1 female. The totals were 20 males, 87 females. I am in contact with Dr. Michael Collins, co-author of The Wild Silk Moths of North America, to try to form some hypothesis about what might have caused this unusual ratio. Please call me if you had Cecropia Moths emerge this year. I would like to include as much data as possible in this analysis. Also, if you would like to raise Cecropias next year, I would be very happy to send you some eggs at that time, provided that some of my females find mates! The phone number is 508-543-3380.

### Enjoying and Monitoring Butterflies at Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary

The Massachusetts Audubon Society's Stony Brook W.L.S. in Norfolk has upland meadows, ponds, marshes, and woodland trails and is a good place to look for butterflies. After speaking with the sanctuary staff, I set up a program this year for visitors to enjoy, identify, and record their butterfly sightings.

First, we made four sets of an Easy Butterfly Reference Guide. This was done by cutting pictures of typical Stony Brook butterflies from a reference guide, grouping them by color, and mounting them on four sheets of paper. The sheets were then color copied and laminated back-to-back. The result was four copies of a simple, yet effective four-page color guide to local butterflies, available for loan to any and all visitors.

Second, we set out data collection sheets and asked observers to record the species they saw as well as date and weather conditions. There is space on the sheets to record additional butterfly notes and reference books are available for anyone wanting to look up more information on the butterflies they have seen.

Visitors are encouraged to look in three main areas : In the butterfly garden, which did surprisingly well considering the lack of rain this year, in the fields, and along the sanctuary paths.

If the truth be told, not many visitors have logged in butterfly sightings this year. But the homemade field guides are getting a lot of use and so certainly many people are getting into the swing of looking at and identifying butterflies. Hopefully they will start writing down their observations soon.

## **THE DENTON BROTHERS' COLLECTION in WELLESLEY, MA.**

**On October 18th, the Wellesley Historical Society will open an exhibit at the Dadmun-McNamara House at 229 Washington St. on the fascinating Denton Family and their butterfly collection. Members of this family were all well-known for their expertise in many areas of natural history in the late 19th and early 20th century.**

**Some of the accomplishments of the family concerning butterflies include:**

**Sherman Denton invented and patented plaster-of-paris mounts that were used by his brothers for butterflies, and authored a limited-edition work entitled "Moths and Butterflies of the United States, East of the Rocky Mountains."**

**William and Winsford Denton collected butterflies locally and then world wide, and exhibited their collection in many cities.**

**Shelley Denton opened a shop in London, and supplied the Duke of Windsor with a collection of every moth and butterfly found in Great Britain.**

**The Denton Collection of Butterflies won gold and silver medals in the International Exposition in Paris in 1900 and corresponding awards at the Pan-American Exposition.**

**The Dadmun-McNamara House is located in Wellesley at the intersection of Rts. 9 and 16. Public hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, 2 to 4:30 p.m., and Thursday, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. For additional information call (617) 235-6690.**

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