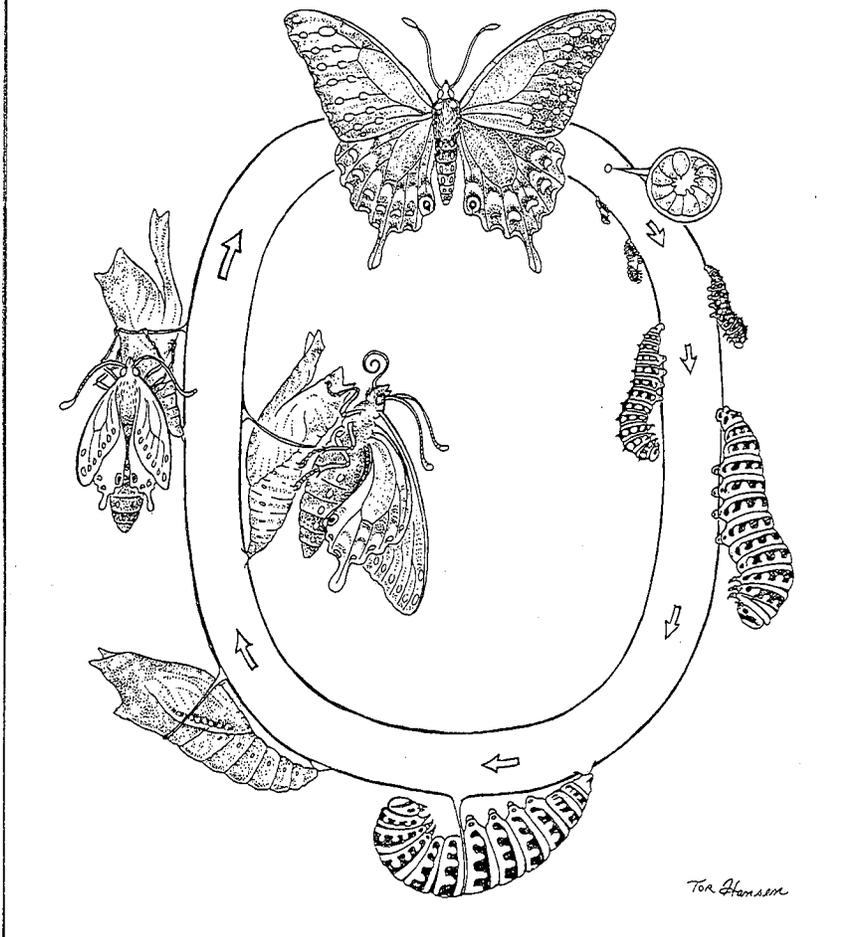


MASSACHUSETTS

BUTTERFLIES

Fall 1999 No. 13a



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*, *Massachusetts Butterflies*, *Butterfly Garden News*, and all of the benefits of the association and club, including field trips and meetings. Regular annual dues are \$25.00. Those joining NABA - MBC for the first time should make their checks 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, Morristown, NJ 07960; telephone 973-285-0907.

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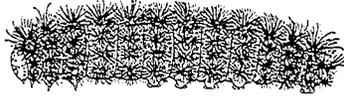
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Submission of Articles, Illustrations and Season Records Deadlines

We encourage all members to contribute to *Massachusetts Butterflies*. Articles, illustrations, sightings, out-of-state sightings, adventures, book reviews are welcome. Please send 4th of July counts to Tom Dodd by August 1 for the Fall issue and your 1999 sightings and records to Tom by December 1 for the Spring issue. Sending your records periodically during the season will make data entry an easier task for Tom. He will turn all our records into a summary and inclusive tabulated record, as has been done in the past. Send all other material to Alison Robb by August 30, and January 15.



Saltmarsh Acree Moth, *Estigmene acree*

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A Brief Visit To Florida in October Has Connections To Massachusetts

Carl Kamp

On Thursday the seventh of October I was still seeing occasional Monarchs flying across the highway as we drove to the Birds Underwater dive shop. As we cruised out, I watched several more Monarchs flying over the water in a southwesterly direction. A large dark unidentified skipper also flew past while a Cloudless Sulphur visited a garden along the shoreline.

Without warning, a large seal-like head appeared in front of the boat, and I could see the nostrils in the huge nose. The animal took a breath, then surface dove causing part of its huge body to clear the surface of Crystal River. This was Manatee country and I was dramatically reminded that I was in Florida and not the Westport River. It was amazing to be in the water with these huge gentle creatures that seemed as curious about us as we were about them.

Later in the day at the Homosassa River State Park we listened to a ranger explain the scope of the problems trying to protect the Manatee. During the talk a variety of swallowtails paraded over the heads of the thirty people in the audience. A Palamedes, Eastern Tiger, and a spectacular Giant Swallowtail all made casual appearances above the visitors as they watched some orphaned manatees being fed carrots. At another spot in the park, a large stand of Lantana attracted Monarchs and several more Palamedes Swallowtails.

Moving inland the next day I visited a brand new Nature Conservancy Park in Poinciana about 20 miles south of Orlando. Out in the fields I watched a Little Yellow land on my brand new bright red bootlaces. Finding them distasteful, it moved to a nearby reddish blossom. Many dragonflies were hunting the open areas while a flock of turkeys flew off into the surrounding vast stands of Saw Palmetto.

Under the cover of some Live Oaks I watched a Long-tailed Skipper flying from plant to plant possibly laying eggs since there weren't any visible flowers. A weakly-flying butterfly flew up and landed among the leaves. This Carolina Satyr was smaller than the similar Little Wood Satyr with an eyespot missing on the underside of the forewing and spotless on the upper wing surfaces. There were five of these in a small area. The next of the day's

continuing cloudbursts caused a dash for cover. When the shower stopped, the sun broke through and a slow-flying Palamedes Swallowtail lured me into the wetlands. That became another failed attempt to photograph one of those beauties that never seems to stop longer than a blink.

Near the end of the walk I saw a large dragonfly fly by with a winged creature in its clutches. The Common Green Darner was undisturbed by my approach for photos as it consumed a Wandering Glider. I wondered if these could be some of the large numbers of migrants I saw at Gooseberry Neck in September. Carolina Saddlebags, Eastern Pondhawks, and several others rounded out the day's ode sightings.

A Gulf Fritillary and several Eufala Skippers along with several others waiting for photo results rounded out the catch of the day. Tonight I'm headed for a few days of camping on the uninhabited isle known as Cayo Costa off the southwestern shore of the state.

Cayo Costa State Park, Florida **October 10-14, 1999**

Carl Kamp

Even with good directions I managed to get lost twice on the way to the Tropic Star daily ferry service in Bokeelia, Florida. I was aiming for Cayo Costa, a narrow six-mile barrier island which is part of the Sanibel-Captiva chain on the Gulf of Mexico. I was the only camper among 10 day passengers on the boat built for Disney as a replica of the African Queen. On the return trip I was the only passenger on the much faster speedboat taxi to the Island. I had chosen to stay in a rustic cabin although there are also attractive tent sights in a grove of Australian Pines just back from the white sands of the shell laden shores of the Gulf.

The Australian Pines provide some welcome shade but are an introduced pest which has taken a serious toll on the native vegetation. The park service seems to be having success with restoring the original habitat by killing the pines. They drill the trunks and insert a poison which kills the trees but leaves the dead trunks for birds and insects. Birds using the trees for nests included

Osprey and Pileated and Red Bellied Woodpeckers. While there I also saw Kestrels as well as a Merlin and a Peregrine Falcon using the snags for hunting perches.

Sea Grape shrubs with their giant leaves surrounded the cabin and, as I unloaded my gear, the first of many Gulf Fritillaries landed on the yellow flowers of the Wild Balsam Apple vines that lined the beach side of the campground. The white flowers of the Common Beggar Ticks were the other main nectar source for what quickly turned out to be a butterfly bonanza. It was sunny and in the high eighties and for the next few hours there was an endless stream of butterflies.

There was no time to think of unpacking. Queens and Monarchs shared the same nectar sources with Eufala and Long-tailed Skippers, while a White Peacock made an unexpected appearance. The Gulf Fritillaries were working on their prenuptial dances. One alighted on the ground and others would make swooping passes from about a foot above with sometimes as many as five at a time. There is no obvious sex difference in this species and I assumed that the males were the swoopers. One of my photos caught one of them flying upside down in mid-swoop. The next day I observed the same behavior, followed by a long coupling of the pair as they perched and flew while coupled.

The early afternoon temperature was in the high eighties as my subconscious mind disregarded what sounded like a Great Horned Owl and focused my attention on the large black and yellow Giant Swallowtail that was continuously floating in and out of the shrubbery. The Zebra is a beautiful longwing that has similar colors and flying habits. There was an open area beside the cabin and a Black Swallowtail circled there continuously for about fifteen minutes before flying off. Later in the day I watched a similar but larger Palamedes Swallowtail exhibiting similar behavior. Miraculously, despite numerous photos and attempts, I have none of these black and yellow continuous fliers on film.

While sitting down for a breather after a few exciting hours of non-stop activity I heard it again. It seemed that there would be no time for eating or resting on this island. About fifty feet from the cabin and midway up one of the pines I found the sound source. Sitting on the same branch and looking down at me were two Great Horned Owls. When they called again I could hear that one voice was lower than the other and caused a slight dissonance when their calls overlapped. I watched them fly out to hunt at dusk and heard them call many more times during my

island time.

After a refreshing dip in the glorious Gulf of Mexico pool I ventured out on the nature trail. The numerous "fox" holes along the way belonged to some of the island's 300 Gopher Tortoises and a sign explained that 32 kinds of spiders and insects also shared these underground dens. At the same time that I saw a tortoise, a fast-moving butterfly landed briefly beside me. Figuring that the "slow" tortoise would still be there, I followed the butterfly. From its size, shape and red marking on the underside I guessed that the fast flier was a Florida Leafwing. I didn't see it again and the tortoise had disappeared, too.

A Southern Black Racer startled me as it sped across the trail with head raised. It paused long enough for a photo before disappearing into the thick palmetto scrub. The mosquitos and no-see-ums seemed to be enjoying the brand of repellent I was wearing as I crossed the mile-wide island. A mixed swarm of dragonflies, again mostly Common Green Darners and Wandering Gliders, helped lower the population of these little biters. On the ground a Little Yellow found a grass stem perch for the evening and high overhead a Magnificent Frigatebird soared effortlessly catching the last rays of the setting sun.

On the third day I hiked to the bay side again for a kayak trip to the southern end of the island. Dense Red Mangrove swamps lined the bay along the three-mile trip and occasionally a medium-sized dark butterfly flew out somewhat erratically over the water. Stopping for a break in a beautiful sunlit opening a dark butterfly flew near me several times before flying back up to the canopy presumably to nectar on the yellowish flowers of this year-round bloomer. Checking the guide I found that this elusive creature was probably a Mangrove Skipper that used Red Mangrove as a food plant. The beautiful iridescent blue markings only increased my desire for a good look.

Great Blue Herons and Common, Little Blue, Louisiana and Snowy Egrets squawked loudly when I came too close to their swamp roosts. Brown Pelicans and Double Crested Cormorants rested and watched from dock pilings. During a quiet stretch away from shore I thought I heard breathing. My own breathing stopped when I saw a large dark fin cutting the surface of the sea. I quickly realized it wasn't Jaws but playful Bottle-nosed Dolphins and that it was their audible breathing I heard when they surfaced.

The usual afternoon thunderheads were forming when I reached the southern end of the island and I could see the house-lined shores of North Captiva Island. Any thoughts I had of

visiting an acquaintance there vanished as I was caught in the tumult of the churning channel currents. It took an all-out effort to get the kayak onto the nearby shore of Cayo Costa. Rounding the point on foot I didn't find the wide open expanses of white sandy beach that I expected. There was white sand but the expanse was interrupted by many fallen trees along the shore.

I chose to drag the kayak on along the shoreline instead of battling the rip of the channel. The sky was darkening rapidly as I began paddling steadily back toward shelter. When the first lightning bolt flashed straight toward the ocean I made a second full-speed paddle to shore. The rain and thunder were pounding and sounding as I pulled in among the mangroves for temporary shelter. Large fish continued to leap out of the water and I watched a Blue Crab clamber along the oyster-encrusted roots of the Red Mangrove trees. The skies were still threatening as I paddled back against a head wind.

I spent a restless night as visions of blue iridescent Mangrove Skippers danced in my head. The next day the skies had cleared and I started the day with my now regular dip in the "pool". I had a small jolt as I approached the outdoor shower and disturbed the large Rat Snake that was using the shower platform to absorb the early morning rays. I started out crisscrossing the northern end of the island. Near the shore a Common Green Darner landed in one of the pines with its prey and for the second time I watched it dining on Wandering Glider. Halloween Pennants were common along the trails and a large Regal Darner was kind enough to land on a blade of grass.

A Common Buckeye landed on the open trail as I continued the skipper search. Intent on the flowering shrubs along the trail I almost missed the Gopher Tortoise who had seen me and was running away at a surprising rate of speed — much faster than I was walking. It quickly veered off the trail into its nearby den. A Large Orange Sulphur made a short appearance. I managed to get one photo before realizing it was the last on the roll. But this butterfly was more intent on the small white flowers than on me fumbling with changing the film. I had great looks at both the upper and lower wing surfaces. There was still some blue iridescence on the upper side of the hindwings but the forewings had lost their color. Even more dramatic were the beautiful white markings around the face and thorax. This was the butterfly show of the trip for me.

I made it to the dock for the 3 PM ferry, but I still can't explain the sadness that wells up inside me even now as I remember leaving this beautiful barrier island called Cayo Costa.

A Colony of Little Yellows in Holyoke, MA

Roger W. Pease, Jr., & Karen Parker

On August 7th of this year, a colony of Little Yellows was finally found in a field along the Connecticut River as it passes through Holyoke, MA. We say finally because a field opposite the Delaney House restaurant has been under watch for a quarter century or more due to the abundance of Wild Sensitive Plant, *Cassia nictitans*, found there. This herb is one of the foodplants of the Little Yellow.

It was Tom Dodd's second-hand report of Little Yellows in Ontario posted on August 5th that motivated a trip to the field. Our reasoning was that if Little Yellows were being found in Ontario, they must be in the Holyoke field. And they were! The first was seen nectaring on a lavender knapweed at the very entrance to the field. A total of six Little Yellows were seen on this first trip including 4 - 5 males and 1 - 2 females. No one to our knowledge found more than nine LY's in the Holyoke field during a visit in 1999, but from the date of discovery to the first frost on the night of Thursday - Friday, October 7 - 8, there was almost a 100 percent chance of finding Little Yellows in the field on any sunny day with the temperature (F.) in the 60's or better. No party that visited the field under such conditions walked away without seeing at least one LY.

The colony was breeding in the field. Mating pairs were observed twice, and on two occasions females were followed while they laid eggs on Wild Sensitive Plant. As far as we are aware, no Little Yellow of any stage in its life history was collected, netted, or even touched. No eggs were removed from the field and raised in captivity. For this reason, we cannot state positively that the eggs hatched and that larvae matured to adults to maintain the colony. However, fresh adults continued to appear right up to the time of the first frost which killed every remaining leaf of cassia in the field. We have checked the field several times after the frost and have seen as many as four Little Yellows in the field. Nectar sources become a limiting factor as October advances. As of this writing the last date of seeing a Little Yellow in the field was October 17th, but we have hopes that the Little Yellows will be around for the rest of the month.

Some convenient websites:

www.naba.org — North American Butterfly Association
(send in appropriate websites for this space. ed)

Spring Azures and Blueberry Bushes — Some Surprising Facts

Karen A. Parker



Spring Azure and Pine Elfin nectaring at Blueberry blossoms. *Karen A. Parker*

One of the first signs of Spring and the forthcoming butterfly season is the Spring Azure butterfly. It feeds on many types of flowers — among them blueberry blossoms.

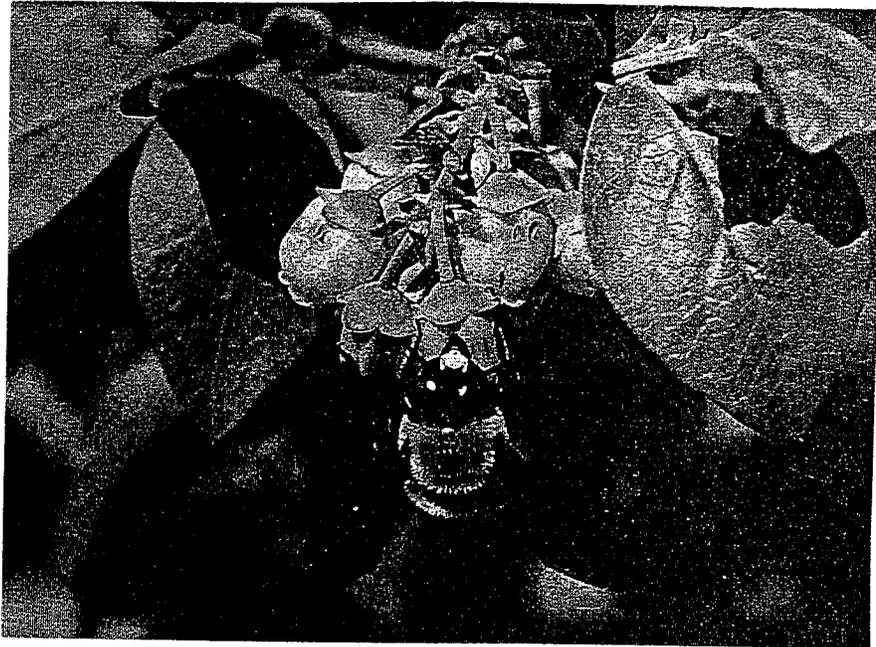
If you look closely at the way many of these butterflies are feeding on the flowers, you will notice that the way they are doing this is very unusual — not from the opening but from the side near the base of the blossom. How is this possible?

The answer to this question was quite a surprise and presented itself to me a few years ago. I was near a blueberry bush when I heard a scraping sound. I turned and saw a Bumblebee chewing a piece of material out of the side of a blossom. What was going on?

Actually it was pretty simple. The Bumblebee was only trying to get a meal for itself. The bee could simply make a small hole in the flower and then eat and rest at the same time. A very energy-saving maneuver.

It is at this point that the Spring Azure enters the picture. It lands on the flower and simply sticks its proboscis through the hole already there and begins to feed. Whether it is attracted by the smell or by the sight of a nectar zone seen through the hole (butterflies would see this in daylight where we couldn't) or both is uncertain, but something surely attracts it to this spot. I have seen this behavior occur for several years now so it must be a normal way of gathering food for this species. Interestingly enough I have also seen Eastern Pine Elfins near these holes — could they gather nectar in the same way?

While this behavior is not 100% true in all cases — the way that Spring Azures feed — I think that a lot of these butterflies do gather nectar in this manner. Who could have thought the work of a Bumble Bee could be so beneficial to the welfare of the Spring Azure (or even other) butterflies?



Bumblebee nectaring through one of many holes.

Karen A. Parker

Cloudless Sulphurs in Chatham, MA: 1998 and 1999

Roger W. Pease, Jr., & Karen Parker

On September 19 in 1998 and again on the same date in 1999, we made a special trip to Chatham to look for Cloudless Sulphurs. The field trip in 1999 was for comparison purposes. How did the numbers and behavior of Cloudless Sulphurs compare in the two years?

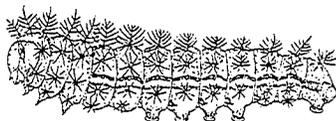
Two generalizations can be made from our observations. First, the numbers for 1999 were only a fraction of those in 1998. We made a point of having a picnic lunch on the hill comprising Seaview Cemetery on the north side of Route 28 in Chatham. In 1998 we observed 13 Cloudless Sulphurs flying rapidly through the cemetery in 58 minutes or an average of one Cloudless every 4 minutes 28 seconds. In contrast in 1999 only one Cloudless Sulphur was observed in the same locality during a picnic lasting 32 minutes. In 1998 one could expect to make more than seven times as many sightings in the cemetery as in 1999. There were no photo ops, however, for the butterflies crossed the open ground of the cemetery with considerable speed and altitude.

We hunted for the mother lode of Cloudless Sulphurs in 1998 and found a stable population in the vicinity of the town landing at the end of Scatteree Road. The second generalization is that the Cloudless Sulphurs observed here in 1998 were not migrating but seemed to have colonized the area and assumed some unsuccessful breeding activity. We estimated that there were at least ten different individuals in this beach area alone. During the time we were there, two or three females at a time were continually laying eggs on the leaves and especially the prickly fruits of a clotbur (*Xanthium* sp.). We brought three eggs back with us, but they failed to hatch and had collapsed within 72 hours. Both males and females were seen nectaring on flowers and especially a yellow crucifer growing abundantly on the bank by the shore. In contrast we saw only one Cloudless Sulphur in this beach area in 1999 and this one was rapidly flying northwest along the beach. We had obtained a map showing the town landings, which we did not have in 1998, and explored the beach as far as next town landing at the end of Cotchpicicut Road and beyond. We saw seven more Cloudless Sulphurs, but all except one were rapidly flying northwest along the beach. The one exception was apparently a female which briefly exhibited interest in a single plant of clotbur. No egg was found on the

burs which attracted the butterfly's attention, however. During the time we were there in 1999 both nectaring and ovipositional behavior were at a minimum.

We think that the beaches extending from some of the town landing sites in Chatham are extremely attractive to Cloudless Sulphurs. There are plenty of nectar sources and clobur seems to induce egg laying although it remains to be seen whether any fertile eggs are laid by butterflies that have migrated in from the south.

Io Moth



Automeris io

Notes From The Garden

Sharon Stichter

A surprise! Perennial Sweet Pea, *Lathyrus latifolius*, turned out to be a notable butterfly nectar source, especially during late June, when not much else is in bloom. It attracted Tiger Swallowtails, Cabbage Whites, European Skippers, Silver-spotted Skippers, and two Gray Hairstreaks later in July. I have not seen perennial pea in any of the usual lists of good butterfly garden plants, but it should be there. It is available from nurseries, but also grows easily from seed, available from *Johnny's* and others, blooming in the second year.

Two other experiments this year produced moderate results. One — a sunken container of mud kept damp with water, beer or fruit juice — attracted only a few azures in the spring. Later in the summer I set out an even more gloriously fragrant mess of rotten fruit of all kinds, including bananas which had been frozen to make them soupier. I moistened all this with a bit of water or beer daily, and was rewarded by the visits of a lot of Common Wood Nymphs, which also came to the rotting fruit under the plum tree. Lastly, one Red-spotted Purple arrived and seemed to find the mess quite appetizing.

Nabokov's Blues: The Scientific Odyssey of a Literary Genius.

Kurt Johnson and Steve Coates. 1999. Zoland Books, Cambridge, Mass. Glossary of Nabokovian Butterfly Names; Nabokov's Scientific Publications on Blue Butterflies; Principal Academic Publications Completing Nabokov's Work on Neotropical Blues; General Bibliography; Index. 340 pp. \$27. US.

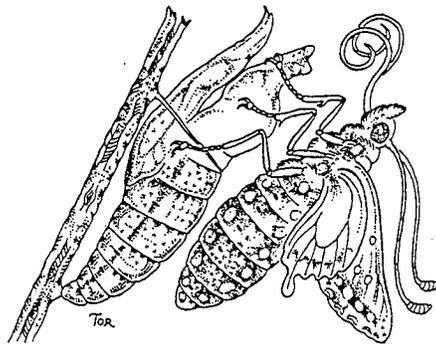
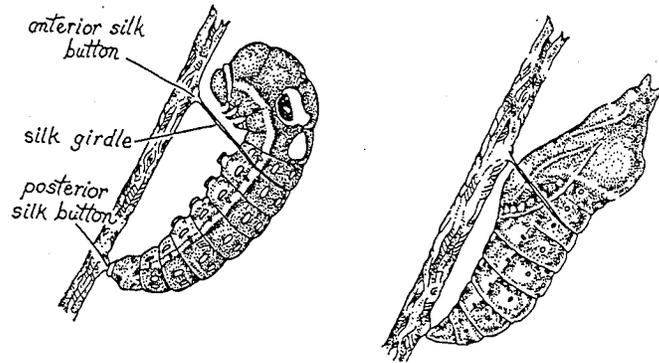
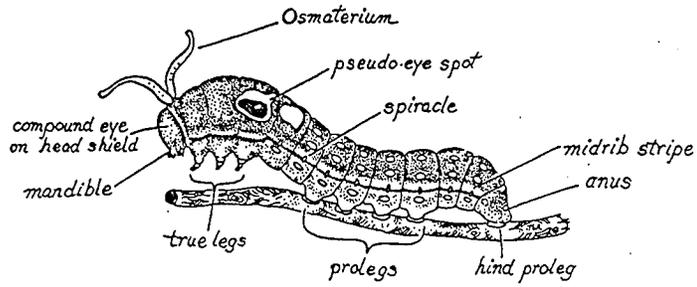
This book is a lively combination of a textbook on lepidoptery and taxonomy, Vladimir Nabokov's life and work, and commentary on his place in cultural and scientific history. It is the story of an outstanding personality which bridged at least two cultures — Euro-Russian and North American — and two disciplines — literature and science, with everlasting effect on all four.

A literary genius for whom lepidoptery was a second career, Nabokov led in taxonomic theory, was thorough and innovative in his research and in his detailed drawings of the internal anatomy of butterflies. The authors judge Nabokov, (1899-1977), whose work precedes the acceptance of the idea of continental drift, as a far more capable and sophisticated scientist than has too often been supposed.

His passion for butterflies began at an early age in his native Russia. A serious collector and researcher in Russia, Europe and the United States, he discovered and named new species and genres of Blues as an avocation. He earned his living as a writer, as a lecturer at Wellesley College and a professor at Cornell University until his earnings from *Lolita* allowed him to retire from teaching. His writings are filled with allusions to butterflies, their grace and beauty, and their names.

Of the authors, Kurt Johnson is a widely published lepidopterist associated with the Florida State Collection of Arthropods, and is a foremost authority on Vladimir Nabokov's life and work. *Nabokov's Blues* includes expeditions and research by Johnson into Las Abejas, a subtropical forest in the Dominican Republic. Steve Coates is an editor at *The New York Times*.

A splendid book, highly recommended. It is disappointing that this book lacks illustrations of Nabokov's watercolors of real and imaginary butterflies.



Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar, crysalis and emerged butterfly. *Tor Hansen*

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