

Massachusetts Butterflies



Fall 2020, No. 55

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Harris' Checkerspots (*Chlosyne harrisii*),
6/14/20, Shrewsbury, MA, Bruce deGraaf

Cover photo: Orange Sulphurs (*Colias eurytheme*),
9/19/20, Groton, MA, Tom Murray

2020 4TH OF JULY COUNTS

by Tom Gagnon

The numbers of butterflies the last 8-10 years have varied quite a bit. In 2014 we counted 14,728 individuals but, by 2018 we dropped in numbers to 8,594 and 9,964 in 2020.

The Spring of 2020 started off with low numbers being reported. Most of the 4th of July counts were only average, and now as I write this, we are into our famous “October Derby”. It has been a slow one; an early frost in some areas on September 22 did not help the Derby here in Western Massachusetts. I have been to the Northampton Community Gardens several times since the frost and VERY FEW butterflies were flying there.

The North Berkshire count had the most individuals with 1,736 and the most species at 48. Congratulations to Tom Tynning, compiler.

What butterflies lead the counts in numbers of over 500?

Cabbage White 988	Clouded Sulphur 1,111
Bog Copper 922	Pearl Crescent 706
Common Wood-Nymph 658	Silver-spotted Skipper 753
European Skipper 678	

Only eight butterfly species were found on only ONE count. They were:

Harvester	Zabulon Skipper
Southern Cloudywing	Northern Cloudywing
Hoary Edge	Milbert's Tortoiseshell
Bronze Copper	Dion Skipper

A big THANK YOU to Karl Barry who kept track of all these counts and compiled their numbers in order. A big thank you to all the participants on one or more of the counts. It is CITIZEN SCIENCE at its very best. Thank you to all the compilers, whether it was 22 species or 48 species. Mark Mello on the Bristol count I am sure would love to have some help counting. There must be someone out there that could help Mark, and on several other of the counts in Eastern Massachusetts.



July Count 2020	Black Swallowtail	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Canadian Tiger Swallowtail	Spicebush Swallowtail	Mustard White	Cabbage White	Clouded Sulphur	Orange Sulphur	Harvester	American Copper	Bronze Copper
Northern Berkshire	4	138	17	2		214	231	14	1	3	
Central Berkshire	4	77		1	28	114	195	5		45	
Southern Berkshire	1	69	2	3		51	224	6			
Central Franklin	3	93		36		150	105			26	
Northampton	5	23		18		156	192	18		24	
Northern Worcester	5	56	2	3		50	93			22	
Concord	4					10	23	1		13	
Northern Essex	3	4				18	8	2			2
Blackstone Corridor	1	2		3		5	23	7		14	
Bristol				1		16	7	2		1	
Falmouth	2	1		3			10	7		17	
Brewster	4	3		1		187		3		63	
Truro		8		4		17		3		67	
Total Count	36	474	21	75	28	988	1111	68	1	295	2

July Count 2020	Bog Copper	Coral Hairstreak	Acadian Hairstreak	Edwards' Hairstreak	Banded Hairstreak	Hickory Hairstreak	Striped Hairstreak	Gray Hairstreak	Eastern Tailed-Blue	'Summer' Spring Azure	Great Spangled Fritillary
Northern Berkshire		13			26	4	2		3	4	72
Central Berkshire		19	2		4		4		18	8	24
Southern Berkshire					3	8			11	2	27
Central Franklin	897	4			76	1		2	7		45
Northampton									44	4	32
Northern Worcester					3				11	2	12
Concord					2				3	3	3
Northern Essex											3
Blackstone Corridor		2			3			7	9	1	10
Bristol									3		
Falmouth		1		2	1			65	41		
Brewster		3		7			1	3			
Truro	25	3		3			1				
Total Count	922	45	2	12	118	13	8	77	150	24	228

July Count 2020	Aphrodite Fritillary	Atlantis Fritillary	Silver-bordered Fritillary	Meadow Fritillary	Pearl Crescent	Baltimore Checkerspot	Question Mark	Eastern Comma	Gray Comma	Mourning Cloak	Milbert's Tortoiseshell
Northern Berkshire	3	44		171	1	11		13	1	2	2
Central Berkshire	1	10			26	13		1		1	
Southern Berkshire	1	1		8	1			1	4		
Central Franklin			6	4	1			5		2	
Northampton	1		6		281	15	1	1			
Northern Worcester					1		1	1			
Concord					18						
Northern Essex			6		3						
Blackstone Corridor	1		1		61	10					
Bristol					80						
Falmouth					62	13					
Brewster					164		1				
Truro					7						
Total Count	7	55	19	183	706	62	3	22	5	5	2

July Count 2020	American Lady	Painted Lady	Red Admiral	Common Buckeye	Red-spotted Admiral	White Admiral	Red-spotted Purple	Viceroy	Tawny Emperor	Northern Pearly-Eye	Eyed Brown
Northern Berkshire	1		4			15	19	1		5	5
Central Berkshire		1	4				10	4		2	8
Southern Berkshire			1			2	3	1	2	5	1
Central Franklin			3		10	1		3		2	9
Northampton	1	1	1				1	17	2	2	
Northern Worcester	1		1				1	1			
Concord	1							1			
Northern Essex			1					3			
Blackstone Corridor			1					1			
Bristol				2			1	7			
Falmouth	6			1				1			
Brewster	1		1				6	1			
Truro	1		1				1				
Total Count	12	2	18	3	10	18	42	41	4	16	23

July Count 2020	Appalachian Brown	Little Wood-Satyr	Common Ringlet	Common Wood-Nymph	Monarch	Silver-spotted Skipper	Hoary Edge	Southern Cloudywing	Northern Cloudywing	Horace's Duskywing	Wild Indigo Duskywing
Northern Berkshire	21	1	27	44	15	48					
Central Berkshire	13	2		111	41	84					
Southern Berkshire	8	21	1	41	9	57					
Central Franklin	13	24			13	269	7	2	2		
Northampton	6	13	4	110	79	151					11
Northern Worcester		43	2		4	61					
Concord	13	1		8	5	6					2
Northern Essex		12	72		2	1					
Blackstone Corridor	9	19		100	18	35					2
Bristol		2		20	16	2				1	1
Falmouth				150	15	2				6	8
Brewster		1		25	40	10				16	
Truro	19	3		49	4	27					
Total Count	102	142	106	658	261	753	7	2	2	23	24

July Count 2020	Common Sootywing	Least Skipper	European Skipper	Indian Skipper	Peck's Skipper	Tawny-edged Skipper	Crossline Skipper	Long Dash	Northern Broken-Dash	Little Glassywing	Delaware Skipper
Northern Berkshire		9	433		19	2		14	18	11	
Central Berkshire		1	12		6	9	1	7	27	9	10
Southern Berkshire		7	21		4	1		5	4	41	
Central Franklin	1	5	2	1	1	2	8	1	3	13	8
Northampton	36	4							62	2	7
Northern Worcester	3	14	102			2	1		9	13	8
Concord	1	2							2		
Northern Essex		25	108	3	18	13		33			
Blackstone Corridor		1					1		34	33	11
Bristol					1	1			3		
Falmouth		4				4	2		44	2	3
Brewster					2		2		49		
Truro		1							13		1
Total Count	41	73	678	4	51	34	15	60	268	124	48

July Count 2020	Mulberry Wing	Hobomok Skipper	Zabulon Skipper	Broad-winged Skipper	Dion Skipper	Black Dash	Two-spotted Skipper	Dun Skipper
Northern Berkshire		9					1	18
Central Berkshire	4	2			2	1	1	50
Southern Berkshire	1	7						12
Central Franklin	1	3				6		47
Northampton	15			1		10		92
Northern Worcester						1		1
Concord	17			1				8
Northern Essex								2
Blackstone Corridor	15					5		108
Bristol			1	2				4
Falmouth								7
Brewster				15				21
Truro				1				17
Total Count	53	21	1	20	2	23	2	387

July Counts 2020 Summary	No. of Individuals	No. of Species	No. of Participants	Party Hours	Date	Compiler
Northern Berkshire	1736	48	10	39	July 5	Tom Tying
Central Berkshire	1022	47	12	41	July 12	Tom Tying
Southern Berkshire	678	40	14	35	July 3	Rene Wendell
Central Franklin	1923	46	9	34	July 4	Mark Fairbrother
Northampton	1456	39	11	28	July 19	Mark Fairbrother
Northern Worcester	534	32	10	22	July 5	Wendy Howes
Concord	148	24	9	18	July 12	Dick Walton
Northern Essex	354	23	8	9	June 20	Russ Hopping
Blackstone Corridor	553	33	7	19	July 12	Tom Dodd
Bristol	174	22	1	5	July 18	Mark Mello
Falmouth	480	28	8	8	July 18	Joe Dwelly
Brewster	630	26	6	14	July 26	Joe Dwelly
Truro	276	23	6	10	July 12	Mark Faherty

“Spring” Azure
(*Celastrina ladon*) (species?),
6/25/20, Shrewsbury, MA,
Bruce deGraaf



Butterflying in the Age of COVID



Without a doubt, this has been an unprecedented year for all of us. As the old Chinese curse says, “May you live in interesting times.” For many, this year has been one of the hardest ever, with severe health issues, economic hardship, and even the tragic loss of loved ones. No one has been untouched during the pandemic of 2020.

But all is not constant doom and gloom, not for us. We’re also among the lucky ones. We have the outdoors to sustain us. We have butterflies to watch, sun on our faces and fields full of flowers to distract us. Sometimes it doesn’t really seem like enough—but every bit of brightness helps, and this year we’ve been drinking it in whenever we can.

And it’s also been encouraging and wonderful to see how many other like-minded people have taken advantage of more time at home, to get out locally and explore the natural world with close friends and family. Social distancing is easier outdoors, and it seems that many, many people this summer have taken some time for fresh air and green spaces. Imagine the discoveries that have been made this summer!, the oohs and aahs of seeing something new and perfect and beautiful in your own local patch. And is it my imagination, or has the air seemed just a little cleaner and the sky a deeper blue?

I asked for other Massachusetts Butterfly Club members’ thoughts about what this summer has been like for them, and here are their responses, in no particular order. And in this era of limited travel, where we are forced to fore-go more distant trips, and instead roam locally, I’ve also broken with tradition and included a couple of articles written for prior years that we weren’t able to include at the time. One, by Bill Callahan, details a trip to Italy and so provides

some vicarious overseas butterflying. The other, by Brian Cassie, is a diary of field work in the fall of 2019 at some of his favorite local patches on the South Coast.

Interesting times, indeed, but also silver linings. Enjoy!

—ed.

This year of the COVID most of my butterfly walks have been in the yard and out on a trail from my house into the town forest where there are a few nice little fields with flowers. In late August I found a fresh female Bronze Copper in one of the fields a half mile from my house. This is my second location in Groton for the coppers. Last year I found a nice little colony of them 2 miles in the other direction from the house.

I found the best times to get out and not see other people on the trails is either when it's raining or on a 95 degree day. Even in rain I was able to find a few butterflies hunkered down in the tall grasses.

The drought this year kept some of the flowers from blooming as well as normal during the summer. The fall flowers seem to be doing a little better with the asters, goldenrod and red clover all in bloom now. Skipper numbers are way down for me lately. Yesterday [September 19] I saw just 1 Peck's and today no skippers or ladies.

—Tom Murray

Last week [early September], Karen Parker and I drove up to the Northampton Community Gardens, and met Tom Gagnon & Harvey Allen. (We wore masks and social-distanced while there). We walked through the gardens, and saw numerous Monarchs and Cabbage Whites. There were also several Clouded Sulphurs, a Silver-Spotted Skipper, a bright male Fiery Skipper, a Pearl Crescent, a Black Swallowtail, a Great Spangled Fritillary, a Summer Azure, and a duskywing. It was a nice warm sunny day.

Otherwise, I haven't been on any butterfly field trips this summer, although I did take walks around my own neighborhood, and in some of the local parks. I mainly saw pretty typical species, most of the ones listed above, as well as Tiger Swallowtails, Eastern



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
(*Papilio glaucus*), 8/17/20,
Arlington, MA, Lisa Wolfe

Tailed-Blues, Peck's Skippers, Wood-Satyr, Hairstreaks, etc. I miss the summer field trips that we've done for so many years at Mt. Tom and Fannie Stebbins. (I did make one early trip to Fannie Stebbins, and saw some of the common species). Hopefully we'll be able to resume those when the Pandemic is over.
—Moe O'Connor

This has been a memorable year for butterflies in Foxboro and neighboring towns. It is, without question, the worst year I have ever witnessed for butterflies. I am so impressed with the dearth of butterflies. On the other hand, at my biodiversity study site at the old Norfolk Airport, almost 650 species of moths have been identified (by September 8) so 2020 has been a mixed bag of Lepidoptera. I am very happy to have had the time to explore both for butterflies and moths, and I really am confident that next year will bring a much better butterfly crop.

We need to find out what is happening with *Satyrium* hairstreaks. I fear that there is some relationship with larvae and ants that has gone out of whack, as those hairstreaks have really disappeared.

—Brian Cassie

Raising Monarchs has been a wonderful hobby. I collect eggs off the Milkweed in our yard (pesticide free!). Over the past 5 years, I've raised and released several hundred. Neighbors often stop by and ask about the project.

This year the Milkweed blossomed early and went to seed before the female Monarchs arrived. In August we had both a tropical storm and a small tornado that damaged the remaining viable milkweed. Yet new shoots sprouted (as Milkweed does) and the Monarchs managed to lay some eggs.

Recent research suggests that raising Monarchs in captivity in large numbers may not be helpful for the overall population (Project Monarch Health). Problems occur due to parasites, OE (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*), decreased adult strength, and possibly interfering with their ability to migrate.

This year I moved my operation outside as suggested and reduced the number of eggs collected and raised. I've released several butterflies so far that appear to be strong and healthy. When released, they flew straight up and towards the south! That was, until they noticed all the flowering plants in the garden! I will continue to research the best practices for raising these beautiful creatures. They bring so much joy to my life, and for others who happen by.

—Kathy King

This year all our field trips for the Washington Butterfly Association as well as our yearly educational program were canceled. So...I have been going out by myself since Butterfly Season began. But those field trips have been my salvation. Not only have I seen many butterflies, but I am collecting data for John Pelham who is going to be writing a book on butterflies of Washington State. I have identified some county firsts and have been able to return to many of the same spots more than once. Additionally, I have worked on my pollinator garden and have seen more butterflies and bees than usual. Because my garden, which includes both vegetables and flowers, has gotten more attention than usual, I reaped the best vegetables I have had in years. So all in all butterflying has kept me sane during the lockdown and social distancing.

—Sue Orłowski, Spokane, WA

In general it was a slow [*butterfly*] year in my yard and at most of the places where I hiked and birded, and I was out a LOT this season. I attributed the low numbers and lack of diversity to the drought, although our little neck of the woods wasn't as bad off as northern Worcester county and parts of Hampshire & Franklin... We are so fortunate to live surrounded by great outdoor spaces. If I

(continued p. 19)



Baltimore Checkerspot
(*Euphydryas phaeton*);
normal form (below)
and *superba* form (left),
both taken 6/22/20,
Grafton, MA,
Garry Kessler



Indian Skipper (*Hesperia sassacus*)
6/2/20, Waltham, MA, Linda Graetz

Red-banded Hairstreak
(*Calycoptis cecrops*), 8/22/20,
Longmeadow, MA, Ted Gilliland



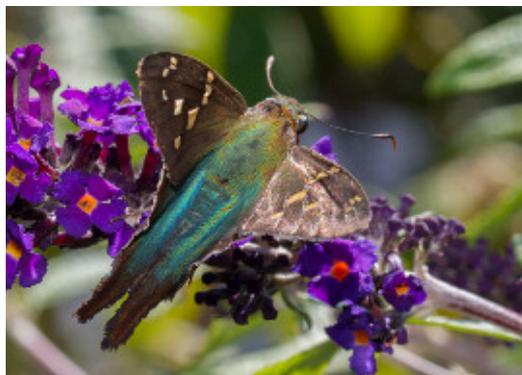


Least Skipper (*Ancyloxypha numitor*),
8/30/20, Hadley, MA,
Bernie Rubenstein

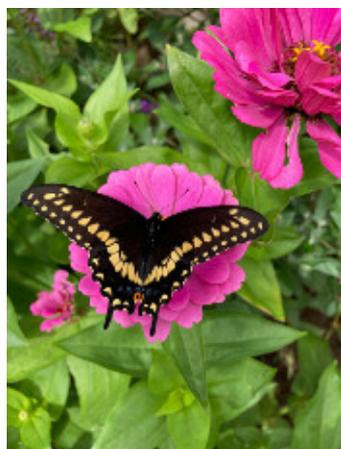


European Skipper
(*Thymelicus lineola*), 6/16/20,
Boston, MA, Lucy Merrill-Hills

Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*),
8/17/20, Arlington, MA, Lisa Wolfe



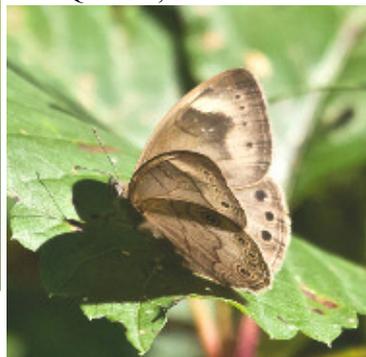
Long-tailed Skipper (*Urbanus proteus*),
10/3/20, Dartmouth, MA, Andrew Griffith



Appalachian Brown
(*Satyrodes appalachia*), 7/21/20,
Quabbin, Bernie Rubenstein



Little Wood-Satyr (*Megisto cymela*),
6/27/20, Shrewsbury, Bruce deGraaf





NABA-MBC Maine-New Hampshire trip, 2006. (left to right): Ron Cloutier, Randy Kuerzel, Elise Barry, Green Comma (*Polygonia faunus*), Barbara Walker, and Tom Gagnon. Photo by Sue Cloutier.



Dion Skipper
(*Euphyes dion*),
7/6/20, New Salem,
Mark Rosenstein

Juniper Hairstreak
(*Callophrys gryneus*),
7/16/20, Woburn, MA,
Garry Kessler





Wall Brown (*Lasiommata magera*), 7/3/18, Tivoli Gardens, Villa d'Este, Italy, Bill Callahan

Queen of Spain Fritillary (*Issoria lithonia*), 7/5/18, Mt. Vesuvius, Italy, Bill Callahan

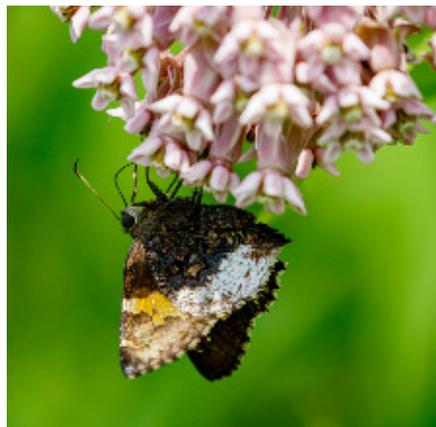


Hoary Edge (*Achalarus lyciades*), 7/7/20, Shrewsbury, MA, Bruce deGraaf



Scarce Swallowtail (*Iphiclides podalirius*), 7/5/18, Mt. Vesuvius, Italy, Bill Callahan

Oak Hairstreak (*Satyrium favonius*), 7/4/20, Arlington, MA, Lisa Wolfe



hadn't been able to go out birding, hiking, butterflying etc. I would have gone insane.

We wanted to send you this wonderful COVID-inspired photo (p. 11) taken by Alan [Rawle] late in the season. It was taken in Hardwick [7/26/20]. Silver-spotted Skippers were reliable this summer.

I only found a few Monarch caterpillars this year, and was unable to rear eggs from the one Monarch I saw laying some (Petersham) because I was on a field trip and didn't have jars/water for collecting the milkweed plants. Almost 3 weeks ago [*early October*] I found a late, almost "mature" caterpillar and brought it home to raise. Alas it formed a chrysalis which is not viable, probably parasitized...Monarch numbers and newly emerged last generation individuals were around in fairly decent numbers here, but I just didn't have the opportunity to raise any. And I never found eggs or cats on any of my numerous *Asclepias* species.

—Wendy Howes

I am 84, old and decrepit and probably half crazy. I am not able to do the hard charging field work I once did. This has been true for a number of years. So all my butterflying in Mass has been confined to my property in Holliston. So this year is not really in any way unusual with regards to my butterfly hunting.

My typical protocol is to go out on the property and try to identify and count every butterfly I see. This year I have seen 27 species of butterflies on the property. A few species less than normal. The real story is in the number of butterflies seen. Very low numbers of individual butterflies were seen. Probably the lowest ever. I have been in touch with Brian Cassie. He reports the same paucity of butterfly numbers.

—Dick Hildreth

Deep Dive

Due to COVID and other distractions this year, I've said little about Baltimore Checkerspot activity here other than a few posts on butterfly sightings. Early on I had discovered clear signs of renewed parasite infection here and knew I would be in for a rough

season keeping a colony going. To make a long story short, my 2020 Baltimore season was terrible but not a complete disaster.

This Spring just-out-of hibernation cats numbered in the hundreds but with just a few displaying single wasp parasitism. However this quickly escalates when those wasps I don't find and destroy, produce a second brood just in time for far more advanced Baltimore cat hosts which can now support 1-2 DOZEN fresh wasps each. Thus it's easy to imagine that by the time any adult butterflies survive to produce their own offspring egg masses, there are thousands of wasps waiting for them.

Butterfly cats were raised outside and on their own with what little protection I could provide with screen cages. But by employing some draconian management tools I invented in 2017 when butterfly numbers were also small, I managed to get about two dozen adult butterflies which produced six egg masses I didn't have to search for. These egg masses were harvested from my caged stand of *Chelone glabra*, mounted 2 each into three wax paper cylinders, and stored inside until color indicated eminent hatching. The cylinders were then set out on a site of *Plantago lanceolata* as far from my usual 'breeding' place as I could manage on our three acres and under a tented cage (Pic).



Now a significant setback occurred when only two of the six egg masses hatched for reasons I do not understand, but cats from these two did well since the tent would let through rain and light and I believe NO wasps. By August they ceased feeding and spun up temporary hibernation webs and the webs were harvested in early September and kept inside in a plastic container. Last Sunday the container with webs was set outside to acclimate cats to now very cold nights and early this AM all the cats in each web were massed outside their web in a dense circle. These were each carefully lifted with a small piece of thin paper board and set out on two vigorous rosettes of *P. lanceolata*. It took 15 minutes for all cats to disappear totally.

—Don Adams



Italy Trip 2018

By Bill Callahan



Nancy and I spent the first week of July 2018 in southern Italy visiting our daughter Gina, her husband Justin and their 3 children (our grandchildren). They work for the US government currently in Djibouti, Africa, and were vacationing in Italy. We were invited to join them. Also, Nancy's mother is a native of the area and we hoped to visit the town where she had lived before emigrating to Springfield at age 14. So while the trip was primarily about family we also hoped to encounter some European butterflies.

We arrived in Rome on a Saturday morning and after greeting Gina, Justin and the kids (ages 7, 4, and 2) at the hotel and settling in for a bit, we decided to explore the Borghese Gardens, which were within walking distance of the hotel. The Gardens are part of a large park with green spaces and ponds and even a zoo. As we approached the entrance gate we spotted our first Yellow (Old World) Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*) crossing the road in front of us. Inside we saw a lot of what we thought were Fritillaries flying about. We later learned they were Wall Browns (*Lasiommata magera*). They were brown with small eye-spots below but orange and black above. In the old gardens there was a small skipper-like butterfly. It had a light brown and white pattern below and was purple above. I believe it was a Lang's Short-tailed Blue (*Leptotes pirithous*) although my photos are not conclusive. Other species

seen here were many Common Blues (*Polyommatus icarus*), Small Whites (*Pieris rapae*) (same as our Cabbage White), Small Coppers (*Lycaena phlaeas*) (same as American Copper), and Mallow Skippers (*Carcharodus alceae*).

Other butterfly highlights in the Rome area were Brimstones (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) and Eastern Bath Whites (*Pontia edusa*) in the Palatine hills above the Colosseum, and we saw Small Heaths (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) (similar to our Ringlet), Common Blues and Wall Browns at Tivoli Gardens in Villa d'Este.

Heading south from Rome we were to stay 3 days at a villa in Torre del Greco at the base of Mt. Vesuvius near Salerno. On the way we stopped at Pompeii to see the ruins from the volcanic eruption of 74 AD. During our tour there we saw a Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) and more Yellow Swallowtails, as well as many Italian Wall Lizards which our grandson Teddy delighted in chasing. After the tour we found a meadow where we got our first Swallowtail photos. There were also many Clouded Yellows (*Colias crocea*) which are much like our Orange Sulphurs. We also saw many Mallow Skippers and some other unidentified skipper.

The next day was spent driving through the volcanic mountains to Castel San Giorgio, the little town where Nancy's mother was born. There were acres and acres of tomatoes, olive and citrus trees among the hills. We also spent a day on the Amalfi Coast driving the narrow, winding mountain roads along the Mediter-

anean Sea and stopping in little towns for gelato and Italian pastries. The scenery was amazing in both areas.

Our last full day there we went to Mt. Vesuvius, which turned out to be the best butterfly spot on



Long-tailed Blue (*Lampides boeticus*),
7/5/18, Mt. Vesuvius, Italy,
Bill Callahan

the trip. I later told Justin it was good we saved it for the last day as I would have wanted to go back there every day. After driving partway up and parking the car, shuttle vans take you to a staging area from where you can hike to the crater on top of the volcano. Along the trail on both sides were beautiful pink, white and yellow wildflowers with numerous butterflies. There were Small Whites, Large Whites (*Pieris brassicae*), Clouded Yellows and Brimstones. There were some gorgeous Long-tailed Blues (*Lampides boeticus*), and Holly Blues (*Celastrina argiolus*), which are in the same genus as our Spring Azures. We saw Small Coppers, Hairstreaks (un-identified), Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*) and Painted Ladies (*Vanessa cardui*). There were many Queen of Spain Fritillaries (*Issoria lathonia*). Maybe the prettiest of all was a Scarce Swallowtail (*Iphiclides podalirius*) nectaring on the pink wildflowers.

As we ascended towards the top and the vegetation thinned I decided to stay and take photographs and let the rest of the family summit without me (also my chest hurt). Nancy took some great family shots and also a nice one of a Small Copper near the crater.

All in all we had a fantastic visit with the family and also managed to see some awesome butterflies. Hopefully we will be able to return someday.



Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*), 7/5/18,
Mt. Vesuvius, Italy, Bill Callahan



Buzzard's Bay Journal - Autumn 2019
Brian Cassie

When I was a first grader, butterflies and caterpillars were a big part of my summertime. I lived in Middletown, Rhode Island sixty years ago, and the landscape was one of fields and stone walls and abundant shrubs and flowers, perfect wandering ground for anyone of any age but perhaps especially wonderful for a six year old. I loved my adventures then.

Last fall, I found myself again wandering around stone-walled fields looking for butterflies and caterpillars, this time across the bay from Middletown - in Westport and South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. This is my favorite place to be, a wonderful patch for soaking in nature. There is always so much to experience in this beautiful corner of the world, and I cherish my visits.

August 30 From east to west, my spots to watch insect and bird migrations along the Buzzard's Bay coast are Allens Neck and Allens Pond (both part of Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary), Sylvan Nursery, Gooseberry Island and Horseneck Beach (both part of Horseneck Beach State Reservation), and Beach Road, Acoaxet. They are expansive areas and they are enclosed areas and each has its wonderful peculiarities that bring me back. Today, I didn't get to Horseneck Beach and Acoaxet. I never get to all of them; there isn't time.

Highlights of the trip were Cloudless Sulphurs at each stop, caterpillars of Monarchs, Milkweed Tussock Moths, Painted Ladies, and American Ladies, more than fifty Common Buckeyes, and a brilliant White M Hairstreak on the sedums at the doorstep of the Allens Pond field station. One Great Blue Skimmer, only my second in Massachusetts, was flying around at the nursery (the spot of my other state sighting some years ago).

Lauren Miller-Donnelly, Mass. Audubon Society naturalist at Allens Pond, watches the area carefully for butterflies and often shares her finds with me.

September 13 Friday the 13th; palindromic date (91319); full

moon! Later tonight, I walked in a cemetery in Foxboro with three friends of mine and found three owls and two shooting stars but earlier today I walked around Allens Neck and Sylvan Nursery and at the former found two excellent hairstreaks - White M and Red-banded - while at the latter a Giant Swallowtail and two neat skippers - Sachem and Zabulon. When we started the Massachusetts Butterfly Atlas Project in 1986, White M and Red-banded Hairstreaks and the Sachem had never been recorded in the Commonwealth, and Giant Swallowtail was a great rarity. Times have changed.

September 17 Today, I was in the field from 7:00 in the morning until 2:00 in the afternoon. The sun shone brilliantly but the temperature never passed 70F. It was glorious fall weather, if indeed a few days short of astronomical autumn. Cloudless Sulphurs have been the talk of the town lately. Most years there are few around. Today, I saw twelve and who can say how many more zoomed to the east unseen. It's the biggest flight year in the last two decades.

I started at Gooseberry Island as usual, walked down Horseneck Beach, did the loop at Allens Pond, and finally drove through a little corner of Rhode Island, turned left at "the fork in the road" and spent a little time enjoying the Acoaxet region of Westport. My favorite sightings were Groundsel Trees loaded with butterflies, 245 Painted Ladies (high water mark for this species for me in Massachusetts), and a migrating Mourning Cloak.

No swallows of any species were seen, which was



Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis senna*),
9/23/20, Wareham, MA,
Andrew Griffith

very surprising. The best birds were a Western Sandpiper, three American Kestrels, and three Sharp-shinned Hawks.

September 23 Clear skies, temperature topping out at 74 degrees, lots of time on my hands.....but a strong southwest wind, not very good for southbound butterfly migration. On the Buzzard's Bay coastline, winds from the west, northwest, and north typically produce the best fall butterfly flights. Southwest winds can be okay but anything from the east stops the migrants in their aerial tracks. If a butterfly is heading southwest and the wind is from the northeast, it is directly behind the insect, but even on the clearest of northeast wind days, nothing seems interested in moving.

Nothing lepidopterological, that is. From 6:55-9:55, approximately 22,000 Tree Swallows flew from the mainland out to Gooseberry Island. The flight itself was a spectacle and the swarming mass of swallows over the reeds on Gooseberry was a visual and auditory event to behold. Last week, no swallows. Today, a maelstrom of them, every one a Tree Swallow.

There was a very bright Horace's Duskywing at the Allens Pond butterfly garden, but the butterfly highlight for me was a female Cloudless Sulphur laying egg after egg on the foliage of Partridge Peas, one of the two Sennas we have in Massachusetts. Cloudless Sulphurs are beautiful butterflies, but this far north they typically dash across the landscape without stopping and so are hard to study. This female could not have been more obliging, probing about in the flowers right beneath my feet. I confess that I left her there, still laying eggs, after ten minutes of watching her ovipositing.

The day had its diverse nature moments, as all here do - Gray Treefrog and Fowler's Toad at Gooseberry Island; one Beach Poppy still in bloom; a Brown Angle Shades Moth at the Horseneck Beach campground entry building; scores of fiddler crabs at the Allens Pond marsh bridge; Pectoral Sandpiper on the rocks at the southern tip of Gooseberry Island.

Four hours in the field : Gooseberry Island, Horseneck Beach, Allens Pond.

September 25 Would today be the day when thousands of Monarchs swept through the area on their way south and west? The weather was perfect - clear, NW breeze, 55F-72F. I got into the field at 7:00 and stayed until 2:30, visiting all of my spots except Allens Neck. Flickers were streaming along at Gooseberry Island, Merlins and harriers were in the air, Black Saddlebags and Common Green Darner dragonflies



Monarchs (*Danaus plexippus*) on *Liatris ligulistylis*, 9/8/20, Arlington, MA, Lisa Wolfe

were moving well. But, were Monarchs primed for their first really big southward flight? The short answer is no. Nine hundred Monarchs is a good number but not the hope of the day. In the past, we've gotten flights of 10,000+ twice. We've also had years when the biggest "flights" of the year involved five or ten butterflies. This year looked like a good one, with Monarchs reported in substantial numbers all over New England all summer long. Perhaps a huge flight will come one day soon.

Some other highlights of the day were very good skippers at the nursery butterfly bushes - two Sachems, Ocola and Long-tailed Skippers - four Cloudless Sulphurs, 78 Common Buckeyes, and, at Horseneck Beach, twenty thousand Tree Swallows moving west along the dunes and a single Whimbrel walking around the campground, hunting insects in roadside grasses.

September 27 So many crystal clear days this month and

another today....but I was stuck an hour north of the coast for much of the day and didn't get to Gooseberry Island until 2:45. In an hour and a half marching around the center and east sides of the island, I found 98 Common Buckeyes, 69 Painted Ladies, 15 American Ladies, a single Question Mark, 3 Cloudless Sulphurs, and 875 Monarchs, among other species. All but the Cloudless Sulphurs were not migrating but milling around, feeding on Seaside and Narrow-leaved Goldenrods. The winds were out of the south and southwest.

That was a healthy batch of Monarchs and I skipped over to Allen's Pond to see if maybe a similar thing were going on there. It was. There were hundreds of Monarchs feeding on the same two goldenrods, in the fields, along the trails, and out on the beach, spread all over the place.

And then, at 5:30, something happened. The wind shifted and blew in from the west and the Monarchs, which hadn't considered migrating all day, started in migrating. I was standing in the parking lot at Allen's Pond, talking to Peggy Call-Conley, a wonderful watercolorist, and looked across the fields to the east and south and all of a sudden there were Monarchs flying due west, all within a few feet of the ground, scores and scores and scores of them over the next forty-four minutes. The Monarch total for Allen's Pond was 743, and for the afternoon, 1618.

Greg Stone, the historian and photographer, watched hundreds of Monarchs this day with me and put some of his photos on his Westport-Gooseberry Island Facebook site.

Bob French, the fellow who builds the Allens Pond stone walls and plants Eastern Red Cedars and pulls invasive plants to improve butterfly habitat, watched the migration, too.

It was just a short visit this afternoon but the people and the Monarchs made it very special.

September 29 Well, one of these days some clouds were bound to roll in and by 12:30 today, there were clouds from horizon to horizon, effectively shutting down today's butterfly show. But it was a very good show earlier, with clear skies, 72 degrees, and winds shifting through from north to west and then back

around to northeast. While the winds and skies were favorable, 1037 Monarchs moved north off of Gooseberry Island and west along Horseneck Beach (both migratory directions). Love was in the air as a mated pair of Monarchs flew along the Horseneck Beach dunes. Several thousand Common Green Darners and Black Saddlebags dragonflies joined the Monarchs. The swallows apparently had all flown south a few days earlier. Not one was seen. But there was a handsome Ocola Skipper on a Seaside Goldenrod and the second Black-waved Flannel Moth caterpillar of the season creeping across the paved walkway.

October 5 After several days of clouds, this morning broke clear and cold, with a good NW breeze. Lots of Paskamansett Bird Club members were at the north end of Gooseberry Island hoping for an excellent migration of birds. Some good birds appeared, such as an immature Bald Eagle, a Swainson's Thrush, White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrows, a Cape May Warbler, and an American Golden Plover. The only butterflies seen were Monarchs, 183 of them on Groundsel Tree and Seaside Goldenrod at the southern tip of the island.

At Horseneck Beach, from 9:10-11:15, it warmed up a bit and the butterfly variety increased markedly, with nine species observed, including 59 Painted Ladies, 276 Monarchs, and an Ocola Skipper. Thousands of Tree Swallows congregated on the sandy beach and swarmed at times. Two caterpillars crossed the path here - a Woolly Bear that was black at the front only and a Hickory Tussock Moth, that was its usual spiffy self.

In the next hour, temps rose to 55 degrees at Allens Pond Sanctuary, and sulphurs and Monarchs were the most abundant butterflies. A male Sachem and a migrating Cloudless Sulphur were highlights, along with a Monarch banding program that was expertly led by Lauren Miller-Donnelly (on her birthday!) and enjoyed by a number of families.

A single Yellow-collared Scape Moth was visiting flowers at the field's edge here. There really are quite a number of moths flying around during the day down along the coast. I am usually without a camera or a moth guide so most of them go unidentified.

A quick jaunt over to Sylvan Nursery found one new butterfly for the day, a Summer Azure, as well as two more Ocola Skippers on the butterfly bushes. What a banner year for this southern species in Massachusetts! Another highlight here was an amazingly small male Common Buckeye eagerly pursuing a normal-sized female. Butterflies never come larger than normal but



Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*), 8/21/20, Wareham, MA, Andrew Griffith

some do arrive into the world as smaller versions than usual. This Common Buckeye was so, so small.

Finally, in half an hour's watching in the Horseneck Beach main parking lot, from 2:20-2:50, fourteen Monarchs flew in low, direct, east to west flight.

October 15 I got down to Gooseberry Island too late this morning to watch the passing parade of migrant songbirds, but at the southern tip of the island, I was watching a male Peregrine Falcon swoop by when I flushed a Short-eared Owl, which flew into the nearby reeds. That was an electric raptor combination.

Gooseberry had seven species of butterflies, including thirty Monarchs. None of the butterflies migrated when I was there, between 9:00 and 10:25.

Next stop was the paved pathway at Horseneck Beach. This has been a good spot for migrating butterflies, moth caterpillars, and small mammals this fall. Today, I found a House Mouse here. That was a surprise. Some very fresh-looking Red Admirals, as well as American Ladies, Common Buckeyes, and fourteen Monarchs were actively moving west, all close to the ground. A mating pair of Monarchs clung to the dried stalk of a Queen-Anne's-Lace. They should have been thinking of migrating, too.

In the grassy fields and edges at Allens Pond Sanctuary, there were still lots of flowers in bloom, including Spotted Knapweed,

Red Clover, Butter-and-eggs, Queen-Anne's-Lace, and others. I checked the Butter-and-eggs for Common Buckeye eggs but found none. The butterfly garden had a splendid male Sachem and the fields dozens of sulphurs. Three Bobolinks were still present and as I was leaving, I found a Short-tailed Shrew.

Alas, the butterfly bushes at Sylvan Nursery had almost run their course and only a handful of butterfly species were visiting the last of the blossoms.

I rounded out the day with a two-hour walk at Allens Neck, where there were scores of sulphurs, twenty-one Monarchs, and the only Pearl Crescent of the day, among nine species of butterflies. There was Spotted Knapweed everywhere but it was ignored by the butterflies, who instead took nectar at the excellent patches of Seaside Goldenrod. One Monarch even found a very late-blooming Yarrow at which to feed. An Ornate Moth (a.k.a. Bella Moth) may have been the handsomest lepidopteran of the afternoon.

This ninth visit to Westport and South Dartmouth this fall may have been my favorite. I am not sure, really, as every trip had its excellent moments and nature highlights.

If my notes inspire you to visit this corner of Buzzard's Bay in 2021 or any time, they will have served their purpose. Share your finds!

Butterflies seen by me :

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Giant Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Clouded Sulphur, Orange Sulphur, Cloudless Sulphur, American Copper, Summer Azure, Eastern Tailed-Blue, Gray Hairstreak, White M Hairstreak, Red-banded Hairstreak, American Lady, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Red-spotted Admiral, Viceroy, Common Buckeye, Mourning Cloak, Question Mark, Pearl Crescent, Monarch (4755 of them), Horace's Duskywing, Least Skipper, Tawny-edged Skipper, Peck's Skipper, Northern Broken Dash, Zabulon Skipper, Sachem, Ocola Skipper, Broad-winged Skipper, Long-tailed Skipper. Additional species observed by others : Variegated Fritillary, Fiery Skipper, Dun Skipper.

Lepidopterfragilisticovipalidocious.



Remembering Ron Cloutier



Ron enthusiastically searched for butterflies here in Massachusetts and across the Americas. His interest included guiding others to find and identify species. Ron was often one of the first to sight an unusual butterfly, but he is rarely in found group photos. Once he had a good look, Ron would step back and everyone would come in to see butterfly. After the crowd moved on, it was his habit stay to observe; see it in different positions, see how it responded to his finger, and watch it fly away.

We joined many Club members at NABA meetings and specialty trips beyond Massachusetts. For that travel, Ron set the personal goal to see over 1,000 species in Mexico, continental US, Hawaii, and Canada. Using species lists, butterfly guidebooks, and the help of experts, Ron reached that goal. Recently Ron carefully planned local travels to garner at least 100 species in Massachusetts in a year. That meant traveling from the Berkshires to the Cape and the many special habitats in between that support rare species. Ron reached that goal 3 times over the last 5 years. Thanks go to the Club as it played such an important role in these adventures for many years.

—Sue Cloutier

We miss you Ron! --ed.

Submission of Articles, Illustrations, and Season Records

We encourage all members to contribute to *Massachusetts Butterflies*. Articles, illustrations, photographs, butterfly field trip reports, garden reports, and book reviews are all welcome, and should be sent to the Editor by August 31 for the Fall issue, and January 31 for the Spring issue.

Send NABA Fourth of July count results to Tom Gagnon at: tombwhawk@aol.com, by **August 15** for inclusion in the Fall issue. Send your season sightings and records to Mark Fairbrother at: mark@massbutterflies.org, by **December 15** (or earlier if possible!) for inclusion in the Spring issue. Records may now be submitted via the online checklist and reporting form, which is available for download from our website at: <http://www.massbutterflies.org/club-publications.asp>

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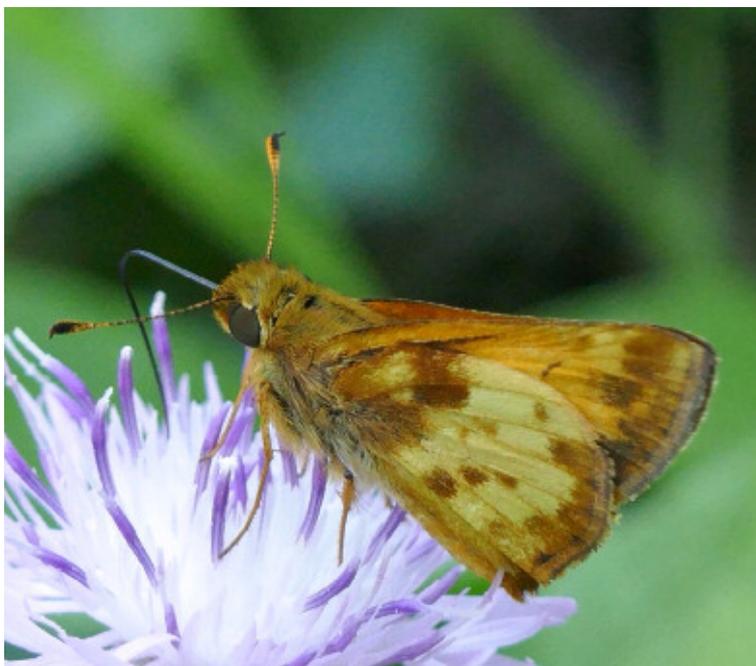
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Ocola Skipper (*Panoquina ocola*),
9/13/20, Wareham, MA, Andrew Griffith



Zabulon Skipper (*Poanes zabulon*),
8/12/20, Lincoln, MA, Linda Graetz