

# Heard it through the Pipevine



May /  
June  
2005

Newsletter of the Austin Butterfly Forum • [www.austinbutterflies.org](http://www.austinbutterflies.org)

*The time has finally come! Jim Brock is here to talk to us about caterpillars. His book will be for sale at the meeting. Mike Quinn reviews Brock's new field guide and Dan Hardy tells us about a mystery caterpillar Marvin Lewis found at Zilker.*

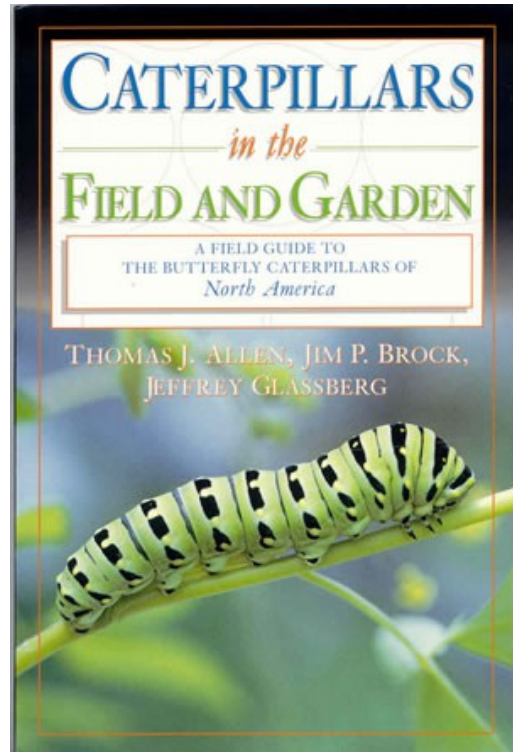
## Club Meeting

**Monday May 23, 7:00 pm**  
**The Wonder of  
Caterpillars**

Zilker Botanical Garden Center

**Jim Brock** will give us a presentation on the wonderful world of North American caterpillars! Naturally Curious, Inc. has agreed to sponsor a book signing starting at 6 pm. Jim's presentation will follow at 7 pm.

Jim Brock, an active lepidopterist for more than thirty years, has studied butterflies and led butterfly-watching tours throughout North America, as well as in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Brazil. He is the co-author, with Kenn Kaufman, of the acclaimed field guide Butterflies of North America. His newest field guide, Caterpillars in the Field and Garden, part of the *Butterflies Through Binoculars* series, co-authored with Thomas J. Allen and Jeffrey Glassberg, will be available for sale at



## You'll Never Call Them "Worms" Again!

*by Mike Quinn*

In reviewing "Caterpillars in the Field and Garden", I find it most difficult to compare this guide to any other entomological publication I'm familiar with... The authors themselves begin their introduction with Alice talking to the hookah-smoking caterpillar in Wonderland. This guide so fundamentally alters one's perspective of what it means to be a butterfly that the introductory juxtaposition with "Alice in Wonderland" wholly justified.

The guide holds page after page of uniformly needle sharp photographs of incredible beasts. The adult names are so familiar, yet the larval images are so beautifully bizarre. I could drink in their likeness for hours on end.

## Renewal Reminder

If we've **highlighted** the expiration date on your mailing label, your membership is up for renewal. Dues are still only \$20 per household. Remit to the Austin Butterfly Forum and send to ABF c/o Doris Hill, 1605 Broadmoor, Austin, TX 78723.

Oh, it may take an ento geek like myself to appreciate are the subtle varieties of the skipper larvae, but only someone who never managed more than a "D" in art class wouldn't be moved by the myriad shapes, colors, patterns and projections of the true butterfly caterpillars.

Nearly all larvae are positioned diagonally for maximal use of available space. Occasionally inset in the corner of a photo is an alternate color form or a close-up of the head capsule or other body part for further aide in identification.

The senior author, Thomas Allen, covered the eastern caterpillars while Jim Brock concentrated on the western species. At least one example of nearly every North American butterfly genus is represented.

A few plates of moth larvae are tucked in to the end of the guide.

Caterpillars in the Field and Garden: A Field Guide to the Butterfly Caterpillars of North America. Thomas J. Allen, Jim P. Brock and Jeffrey Glassberg. 2005. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 224 pp., 496 color photos.



Mexican Silverspot caterpillar (D. Hardy)

## Mystery Caterpillar at Zilker

*by Dan Hardy*

Marvin Lewis called me and said that he had found a strange caterpillar on his passion vine at the Zilker Butterfly Garden. I didn't recognize it either. It wasn't a Gulf Fritillary. Perhaps it was a Julia or a Variegated Fritillary, I thought, as I racked my brain for caterpillars that used passion vine.

I put a photo on the TX-BUTTERFLY listserv (<http://listserv.uh.edu/archives/tx-butterfly.html>), and got a quick reply from Nick Grishin, who lives in Dallas. In addition, the brand-new caterpillar book by

Jim Brock, next Monday's speaker, had a picture. [The photo is show above. The caterpillar is black and orange. ~Ed.]

The answer surprised us: Mexican Silverspot (*Dione moneta*). I contacted Marvin and he put the caterpillar in a cage where he will raise it to adulthood. Chris Durden reports that he has only two sight records of this species in Austin.

You'll find a picture in Jim Brock's Butterflies of North America. Mexican Silverspots are common in Mexico. They rarely enter the US in the Rio Grande Valley and in Big Bend. Like all Heliconians, they use passion vine as a hostplant. The adult is the size of a Gulf Fritillary. Above it is brown with a distinct darkening of the brown at the base of the wings that produces a two-toned effect. However, it lacks the black rimmed white spots on the forewing that the Gulf Fritillary has. The underside of the wings show silvery-white spots similar to the flashy underside of a Gulf Fritillary.

This episode reminds me of the Polydamas Swallowtails caterpillars that turned up unexpectedly in Coby Dingus' backyard last Fall. That was another rarity from further south. Remember that Sally Breed subsequently found more Polydamas on her pipevines.

So... check the caterpillars on your passion vines and do a double-take on all Gulf and Variegated Fritillaries. A Mexican Silverspot may be lurking.

## Blue Passionvine, an Unexpected Host

*by Mike Quinn*

Marvin Lewis' find of a Mexican Silverspot larva at Zilker Botanical Gardens was quite the find as it appears to be the northernmost breeding record for this species. The adult butterfly is quite cool; I've always likened it to a Gulf Fritillary-on-steroids. When Marvin reported that it was feeding on Blue Passion Flower (*Passiflora caerulea*), I was a bit surprised as this species is native to South America. (Most specimens in the Missouri Botanical Garden database are from northern Argentina, southern Brazil, and Paraguay.)

I initially asked Phil Schappert to write an account of this plant as he edited the Passiflora Society International's newsletter, but he was "swamped" teaching a field course at Stengl "Lost Pines" Biological Station.

Failing to get an article out of Phil, I fell back on my own resources... According to Vanderplank (2000), Blue Passionvine is the most widely cultivated passionvine, in part because it's also one of the hardiest species. It's cultivated both in southern U.S. and southern Europe. (It was first introduced into Europe in 1699!) The roots have survived temperatures as low as 5°F. After such a winter, the foliage usually doesn't reappear until July in northern latitudes. It's usually evergreen in central Texas.

Several Parks & Wildlife botanists more familiar with the plant than I, observed that it can aggressively spread by runners, similar to some of our native passionvines such as *P. foetida* and *P. incarnata*. It's best controlled by growing it in a large pot as most *P. caerulea* are at the Zilker Gardens.

It reportedly can grow to 30 feet. Several sources recommend cutting it back severely to induce flowering closer to the ground. Blue Passionvine only flowers on the new growth which can be quite high after about five year's growth.

The white and purple-blue flowers which appear in summer may be as large as 4 in across. The leaves are palmate, usually with five lobes. The orange fruit is egg-shaped and while edible, it isn't as tasty as other passionvines. The plant grows best in full sun and in soil with good drainage.

Some 12 species of Heliconiinae butterflies are listed as hosting on *P. caerulea* in the Natural History Museum's Hostplants and Caterpillars Database. Listed butterflies that occur in Texas are Erato Heliconian, Variegated Fritillary, Isabella Heliconian, Julia Heliconian, and the Gulf Fritillary.

I can only echo Dan Hardy's suggestion to double check all caterpillars on passionvine. You never know when something really mysterious will show up...

John Vanderplank. 2000. 3rd Edition. Passion Flowers. MIT Press, Cambridge. 224 pp.

## Membership Policy Change

Beginning July 2005, club membership is changing from rolling renewal to calendar year renewal. Membership is still \$20 per household, but mid-year and late-year membership fees will be prorated for the remainder of the year. For example, a person joining the club in July '05 would pay \$10 for membership through December '05 and then renew at \$20 for 2006.

## Oak Hairstreak Bloom

In mid May, Sibyl Deacon reported an abundance of Oak Hairstreaks (*Satyrium favonius*) estimated in excess of 800 (!) on her property west of Wimberley near the Hays/Blanco County line. The hairstreaks were primarily nectaring on Antelope Horn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*). Sibyl counted as many as 28 hairstreaks on a single flower head!



## Upcoming Events

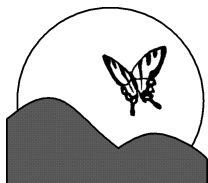
*We keep a calendar of upcoming events on the [austinbutterflies.org](http://austinbutterflies.org) web site. Please visit the web site to learn of changes and new additions – we're always finding great new events to add.*

**Mon May 23 – Club Meeting.** The renowned Jim Brock is giving us a talk on caterpillars. See the large box on the first page of the newsletter.

**Mon Jun 27 – Club Meeting.** David and Jan Dauphin are talking to us about the butterflies of the Rio Grande Valley.

*Please submit newsletter events, corrections, and suggestions to the editor, Joe Lapp:  
[joe.lapp@pobox.com](mailto:joe.lapp@pobox.com)*

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## Austin Butterfly Forum Membership Form

Become a member or renew your membership.

Your membership helps support our club activities, but members also receive bimonthly **newsletters** with upcoming events and informative articles, **butterfly plants** that we often give away, and **discounts** on books, T-shirts and more.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Daytime phone:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Evening phone:</b>
<b>City:</b> <b>State:</b> <b>Zip:</b>	<b>Email:</b>

Membership is \$20 annually per household, payable to the Austin Butterfly Forum and sent to:  
ABF c/o Doris Hill, 1605 Broadmoor Drive, Austin, TX 78723