

Heard it through the Pipevine



Jan/Feb/Mar
2008

Newsletter of the Austin Butterfly Forum * www.austinbutterflies.org

Club Meeting Native Passion Vines

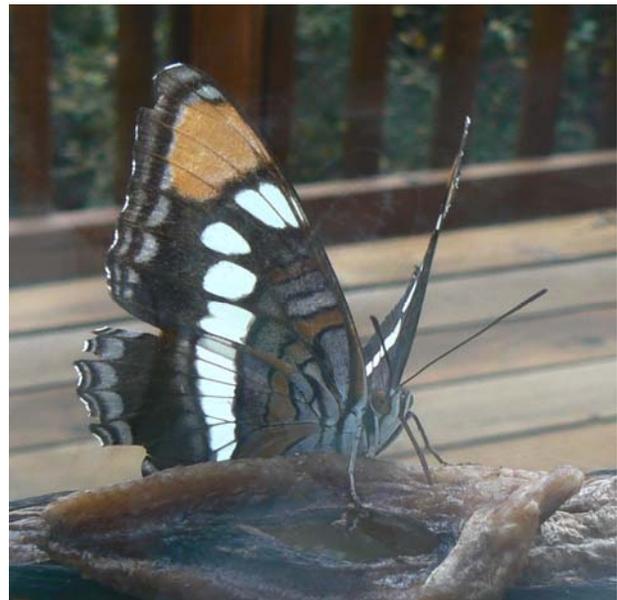
7:00 pm Monday March 24, 2008

Zilker Garden Center,

Presentation by **Katie Hansen**, who teaches the Native Plants of Central Texas course at the University of Texas. Katie will tell us about our native Passionflowers, the beautiful genus *Passiflora*, host plants for the Heliconian family (Gulf Fritillary, Zebra and Julia). Topics will cover identification, which Passionflowers to grow, and which to avoid.

Cecropia Moth eggs or early instars will be available at the meeting. They eat Mexican Plum, various cultivated fruits like pear, hickory, and pecan. And they eat a lot! See more on page 6.

Nan Wilson, an artist that specializes in butterfly



Arizona Sister, on rotten bananas (Roxie Rochat)

Let it Rot, and They Will Come

This newsletter has provided a treasure-trove of articles, but one of the most inspiring for me was Brush Freeman's "Baiting with Bananas" in the Feb/Mar 2007 issue of "Heard it through the Pipevine" (available as a PDF download from <http://www.austinbutterflies.org/publications>). I tried his suggestion of placing ripe bananas in hanging wire suet holders under the eaves of my roof and found out that he was right: overripe bananas attract many butterflies! They've provided year-round entertainment for both me and my feline friends, who are especially delighted with their new Kitty TV channel.

A weary victim of many lost battles with raccoons and squirrels, I soon found that the chains, padlocks, and extra baling wire security measures formerly required to keep my suet baskets attached to their designated

Mar 29 & 30 - Zilker Garden Festival 10 am - 5 pm. Support the Zilker Botanical Garden by purchasing butterfly larval and host plants and much more. Observe live caterpillars and adults in our booth. *Note: Admission is free if you sign up at our March meeting to volunteer. We will give out tickets and parking passes at the March meeting.*

Sunday, April 6 Field Trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, led by Val Bugh and Dan Hardy. From 9-12 am. Meet at entrance pond. Participants get in free.



Roxie Rochat

tree limbs were no longer necessary for banana feeders hung from the eaves. But when the bananas shrunk and the frozen ones dripped on my deck, I discovered that my old saucer-type hummingbird and butterfly feeders converted quickly into banana holders just by removing their red / yellow tops. These saucer feeders were perfect for holding bananas and other fruit. Best of all, they have their own built-in ant moats, which came in handy during the summer when I remembered to keep the moat filled with water.

I also found that a suction-type soap dish attached easily to the outside of the window and provided even more up-close-and-personal encounters. The butterflies don't appear to be bothered by the cats on the inside of the window.

I wasn't sure what to expect in the winter, but last December, five Red Admirals visited oranges and bananas on the feeders regularly on warm, sunny days. In January and February of this year, the species diversity tripled to include Question Marks and Goatweed Leafwings.

My favorite visitor so far was an Arizona Sister on Dec. 2nd, 2007. This species is discussed on the next page.

Brush baits all the time and he has pulled in some amazing rarities. He had a Tailed Cecropian on the coast at Port O'Connor, a butterfly that only rarely occurs in the valley.

As Brush mentioned, there are many other visitors besides butterflies. This year, my goal is to explore the mysteries of my non-butterfly guests, beginning with the red Paper Wasps that I've been seeing recently. I sent a picture to Valerie Bugh, who provided the following information.

Yes, they are paper wasps (*Polistes carolina*). They are probably females because these are social insects (*Vespidae*) and, as with honey and bumble bees, the males are not numerous or important most of the time. They are considered beneficial because they prey on insects and spiders to feed their brood. However, the adults are vegetarian (there is speculation that they sometimes eat part of the stuff they take back to their nests for the babies, but I've never heard any confirmation on that). They are actually probably more beneficial than not, since their favorite prey includes slow-moving caterpillars and not too many pollinators. In fact, they are also pollinators since they feed at flowers some of the time. The adults usually spend more time feeding in the spring and later in the fall, but in the middle of summer they are seen much less often, as then they are busy hunting for their queen's brood back at the nest.

Unlike solitary wasps, which will paralyze prey for their young and then drag the whole victim back to a nest to be encased with an egg, the social wasps butcher their prey on the spot, cutting it up into manageable pieces to carry back to the nest. They don't have to worry about spoilage because they feed the food immediately to the growing grubs.

By the way, *P. carolina* is one of our larger paper wasp species, and certainly one of the most noticed by the general public, partly because they are common and partly because they like to build their nests in sheltered areas, like under eaves or under the lips of potted plants - so look before you place your fingers anywhere unseen when gardening!

-- Roxie Rochat and Val Bugh



Roxie Rochat

Arizona and California Sisters?

The California Sister almost certainly contains two separate species. Brock and Kaufman's **Butterflies of North America** newest printing calls this group the California Sister complex. The map shows disjunct ranges: one in California (*Adelpha californica*) and one in the rest of the US (*Adelpha eulalia*), which includes Texas. Evolution through geographic separation is called allopatric speciation. The two have slightly different patterns and DNA. See:

<http://www.utahlepsociety.org/adelphabredowi.html>

So, ours is now called the Arizona Sister. I don't know why Arizona gets name priority over Texas. It really doesn't matter, since the California form doesn't occur here.

Arizona Sisters lay their eggs on oaks and their life cycle and caterpillar behavior are like the Viceroy and Red-spotted Purple. All lay an egg at the leaf tip. The early instar builds a frass chain and hangs from it when not eating. Older instars look like bird droppings and simply sit on the leaf adopting odd postures..

—Dan Hardy

New Board for 2008 (new members boldface):

President: Mike Quinn

Programs: Dan Hardy

Membership: **Bob Beneski**

Treasury: Doris Hill

Publicity: **Roxie Rochat**

Garden Council: **Mary Holland**

Secretary: **Miriam Vaughn**

Special thanks to outgoing board members Jeff Taylor, Mary Helen Quinn, Marvin Lewis, and Julie Marsden.

Zilker Garden Work Day

There was delightful weather Saturday for the club's work day. Fifteen people helped. Thanks to Jean Love, Janelle Vaughn, Miriam Vaughn, Jackie Means, Teri McClelland, Dan Hardy, Mark



McClelland, Teri McClelland, Liz Cannedy, Mary Helen Quinn, Mike Quinn, Roxie Rochat, Anna Nguyen, Mary Holland, Marilyn Kircus, and Bob Beneski.

Spreading mulch was our main task. After weeding we shoveled, hauled and spread mulch. Zilker staffer, Robert Wilson, directed us. We accumulated 45 hours in volunteer hours.

After our labors we spent a short time butterflying in the garden. We spotted a female Southern Dogface laying eggs on the newest leaves of a kidneywood, Dusky-blue Groundstreaks, Juniper Hairstreaks, Henry's Elfin, Cloudedless Sulphurs, a an early Monarch were found.

In the parking lot, we watched a male Black Swallowtail patrol back and forth. The garden parking lot is just high enough to draw male Black swallowtails for hilltopping. It's not very high, but it's enough. I remember watching a male swallowtail patrolling the same route for several weeks. Mt. Bonnell is another spot where you never fail to see one or more male Black Swallowtails patrolling.

—Dan Hardy

Spring Specialties

There are some spring specialties that everyone should be looking for, especially since many are univoltine. Univoltine species complete only one life cycle a year. The adults usually fly for a limited time in the spring. This life cycle may offer the advantages of abundant fresh leaves and flowers for caterpillars, scarcity of parasites early in the season, or the carefully timed emergence of adults may ensure that males and females are simultaneously abundant.



Henry's Elfin Caterpillar on fruit of Mexican Buckeye

Henry's Elfin: This brown hairstreak has a subtle beauty, so study it closely. It likes to lay eggs on Redbud and Mexican Buckeye. Adults fly late Feb - early April. Therefore, check these two host plants in late March and April for caterpillars, which can be red or green. The red ones blend in well with the red flowers. They will also eat into the insides of the pendant fruits of the buckeye. Look for a small hole in these pods, open it, and you may find one.

Falcate Orangetip—seems to be more common west of town, at Pedernales St. Park or Enchanted Rock. They lay eggs on Rock Cress (*Arabis petiolaris*). Follow a female to the plant.

Oak Hairstreak—mid to late spring. Adults may swarm on flowers such as Antelope Horn. After ovipositing on oaks, the egg enters diapause and overwinters. In March and early April, the caterpillar emerges and eats fresh oak flowers and leaves, pupates, and then promptly emerges.

Soapberry Hairstreak—In May; always near Soapberry trees. Overwinters as egg. Emerges in early April and caterpillar feeds on leaves of host tree. Look for leaf damage.

Little Wood Satyr—their season stretches out until early June. There may be several overlapping groups.

Juvenal's Duskywing—may fly other times besides spring. See next article.

Yucca Giant Skipper—lay eggs on Twisted Leaf Yucca and other yuccas. Enchanted Rock is a good place. Adults hilltop. You'll need a little luck finding one of these. A sighting is always memorable.

—Dan Hardy

Identification of Horace's and Juvenal's Duskywings

Horace's and Funereal Duskywings are by far our commonest duskywings. If you look at all the look-alike species in this genus that occur on the east coast or in the southwest, you realize we have it easy. But the Juvenal's Duskywing turns up here occasionally, and it is almost identical to Horace's. Both use oaks as host plants. (Funereal on the other hand uses herbaceous legumes.) Horace's flies spring, summer and fall, but the Juvenal's is mainly spring. Durden's records also show it in mid summer. Look for it during the next few weeks.

The male's genitalia are strikingly different, but this feature is useless on the wing. The uppersides are similar, but the *underside of the hindwing* is what you have to see. Juvenal's has one or two distinct white spots which sit on top of a darker spot. Although Horace's can have faint pale smudges in this area, they are not as distinct as Juvenal's.

I find it *very* hard to get a look at this part of the hindwing. Duskywings bounce all over the place. They are proud of their uppersides, but rarely show the underside for long. Plus, this area can be worn, which leaves you in doubt if it is a worn Juvenal's or a Horace's.

Remember, Horace's vastly outnumber Juvenal's. It's Horace's until proven otherwise.

—Dan Hardy



Juvenal's Duskywing

Underside of hindwing has two white spots.

Horace's Duskywing

Lacks these spots

The above photos are from **Dale Clark** and are on the The Dallas County Lepidopterists' Society web site: <http://www.dallasbutterflies.com/>. This web site has excellent photos of caterpillars and mounted adults. Check it out.



Val Bugh

One tough caterpillar

Val Bugh found several *late* instar **Crimson Patch caterpillars** feeding on the new growth of Flame Acanthus in early March. One was also found in the insect hut at LBJ Wildflower Center last week while someone was cleaning the cages.

It must have overwintered in a sheltered area, like leaf litter. There would be minimal plant food. I didn't know they did this, nor did I know they could survive the winter temperatures we had. However, reading more, I find that several crescents, including our Texas Crescent and Silvery Checkerspot normally overwinter as partially grown caterpillars. —Dan Hardy

Calendar

Mon March 24 - Austin Butterfly Forum Meeting, *Passion Vines of Texas*. Presentation by Katie Hansen. Zebra Heliconians delighted Austinites in scores of backyards in 2007. Will this trend continue? What can you do to support future generations of Zebras, Julias, and other Heliconian butterflies? The answer may be as simple as planting certain Passionflowers, the host plant of this genus. Zilker Botanical Garden, Center, 7pm. **Cecropia** moth eggs will available for raising. Artist Nan Wilson shows her works.

Sat and Sun Mar 29 & 30 - Zilker Garden Festival 10 am - 5 pm. Support the Zilker Botanical Garden by purchasing butterfly larval and host plants and much more. Observe live caterpillars and adults in our booth. See [Zilker Garden Festival](#) for ticket information. Note: Admission is free if you sign up at our March meeting to volunteer in our booth.

Sun Apr 6 - Field Trip: 9 am to noon at the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#). Val Bugh and Dan Hardy will be our leaders. We will look for butterflies, insects, and spiders at this beautiful garden. The center has agreed to waive the usual \$7 entrance fee for this field trip! Thanks to Val for arranging this discount.

Sun April 27 - Field Trip for MEMBERS ONLY, led by April speaker, David Wagner. Time and location to be announced. If you plan to go, contact Dan Hardy at dhh787@yahoo.com or 328-8750.

Mon Apr 28 - Club Meeting: *Tales of Woe, Deception, and Wonder: The Myriad Defenses of Texan Caterpillars*. Presentation by **David L. Wagner**, author of the recently published [Caterpillars of Eastern North America](#). [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#), 7:00pm. One theme emphasized in the work is the array of fascinating adaptations that caterpillars employ to elude predators (especially birds). In a presentation suited to a wide age range of nature lovers, Dr. Wagner will show a splendid battery of macrophotographic images that showcase the wonderfully varied and deceitful ploys that caterpillars employ to dupe birds and other would-be predators. Along the way he will touch on silk, spines, and other stuff you'd never associate with a bunch of bugs. The talk features a menagerie of bizarre and beautiful creatures from his book, which has proven to be extremely useful for the Austin area. Dr. Wagner will be selling and autographing copies of his book at this presentation.

Sat May 3 - Workshop: *How To Know and Grow Austin Butterflies*. Learning to identify common butterflies of our area is only one aspect of the Austin Butterfly Forum's *Third Annual Butterfly Workshop*, held from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#). Topics will cover hostplants, how raise caterpillars and watch metamorphosis at home, strategies for caterpillar survival, identification, as well as books and resources about this rapidly growing hobby. The workshop will also include a light lunch and a hands-on walk to identify butterflies at Zilker's Doug Bachly Butterfly Trail. Partici-

pants will be given plants to take home to begin attracting butterflies to their own gardens. To register, please call Jeff Taylor at 255-0368 or kscitaylor@prodigy.net. The cost is \$35.00.

Sun May 4 - Field Trip - Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. This is about 2 hours from Austin. 9 am till early afternoon, led by Dan Hardy. Meet at 9:00 am near the restrooms at the circular turnaround. After entering the park and paying the entrance fee, turn left, then right, to cross Sandy Creek. After the creek turn right, park, and walk to the restrooms near the picnic area and gazebo at the beginning of the Summit Trail. The entrance fee is \$6 per person (an annual pass gets a carload of people into the park). Bring a sack lunch and water to carry with you in a pack. We may eat along the trail. Bring sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen. Be prepared for a long hike (3-4 miles) with some rocky areas.

We will be assisted by Lance Allred, an Austin-based photographer. Lance is involved in a book project on Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. The project covers the history, geology, weather, flora, fauna, and activities, with the goal of producing a comprehensive multi-disciplinary guide to the park. He will also give our September program. We may find Falcate Orangetip, California(now Arizona) Sister, and Viceroy. The wildflowers can be incredible at this time of year. Free to members, \$5 for non-members. For more information contact Dan Hardy at dhh787@yahoo.com or check our website.

Mon May 26 - Club Meeting: Gardening to Attract Butterflies: Questions and Answers. Presentation by **Geyata Ajilvsgi**. [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#), 7:00pm. Geyata is the well-known author of *Butterfly Gardening for the South*. This path-breaking book showed how to design a garden to attract butterflies not only for nectar, but also for caterpillar host plants. Author of *Wildflowers of Texas* and *Wild Flowers of the Big Thicket, East Texas and Western Louisiana*, she is a freelance plant field taxonomist working for various environmental consulting firms, an artist (she makes Plains shields), a writer, and a photographer. Two years ago she built a home just west of Wimberley, where she now lives and works. She is currently working on a book on the *Butterflies of the Hill Country*. Geyata will generously open the floor to questions and will let those questions guide her as she shares her extensive experience about butterflies, gardening and wildflowers.

Mon Jun 23 - Club Meeting: Those Hard-to-Identify Butterflies. Dan Hardy

Sat Jun 28 - Butterfly Count. Austin's annual "Fourth of July" Butterfly Count. Dan Hardy, coordinator. Details TBA.



Cecropia Moths are emerging right now. Last year Joe McKoy and I passed out a lot of eggs and caterpillars at the spring meetings. Later, some members told me they emerged at totally inappropriate times of the year, presumably because they were not left outside. We are still learning. Cecropias eggs and caterpillars will once again be made available at the March meeting. Also, watch around convenience stores and gas station lights at night. These buildings are virtual torches and they attract Cecropia and Polyphemus Moths. If you find a female (narrow antennae), and you want eggs, put her in a paper bag for an night or two, then release her. She will lay eggs on the paper. —Photos by Dan Hardy

Membership Renewal

Dues of \$20 are payable the first of the year. Check your mailing label to see if you've paid. What does this money get you?

- Every year we bring one or more nationally-known speakers and authors. The Forum pays their expenses and give them an honorarium.
- Newsletters
- Discounts at Naturally Curious (available throughout the year, just tell them when you buy)
- Free field trips
- The Austin Area Garden Council requires \$3 per club member. Besides general garden support, this is an incredibly low "rent" for the meeting room.



Thanks to Ro Wauer, our February speaker. We were honored to have Ro Wauer present our Feb. meeting on "The Marvelous Maderas del Carmens," a discussion about the wildlife restration projects in the Mexican mountains across the Rio Grande from Big Bend ational Park. Ro has spoken to us at least four times.



Welcome to New Members:

Carol & Nathan Bales, Joe Bean, Liz Cannedy, Rebecca Coombs, Jackie Davis, Vince & Marguerite Hirsch, Jean Love, Jackie Means, Eleanor Melcer, Kay & Edward Sones, Betty & Ro Wauer, Lucinda Wise, and Ron and Susan Martin (from Shreveport!).

Carol Bales was THE founder of the ABF in 1993. She now lives in North Carolina. Her membership was a gift from another long-time member, Jane Dvorak.



Updated Web Site www.austinbutterflies.org/

We are making a new attempt to keep the club's website up to date. Joe Lapp created this website from scratch several years ago and has recently done a lot of work behind the scenes to convert it to a different format. Now it's more flexible and easier for others to update and contribute new information. There is an archive of old newsletters under 'publications', a link to a video on David Wagner, and detailed information on the field trips. If you have suggestions for our new website, please contact Joe Lapp, Mike Quinn, Dan Hardy, or Roxie Ro-chat.

Austin Butterfly Forum, Inc.
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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.

Name:	Daytime phone:
Street:	Evening phone:
City: State: Zip:	Email:

Membership is \$20 annually per household, due each January and prorated thereafter.

Make check payable to the Austin Butterfly Forum and send to:

ABF c/o Doris Hill, 1605 Broadmoor Drive, Austin, TX 78723