



PRESERVE!

Volume 7, Number 3, Fall 2008

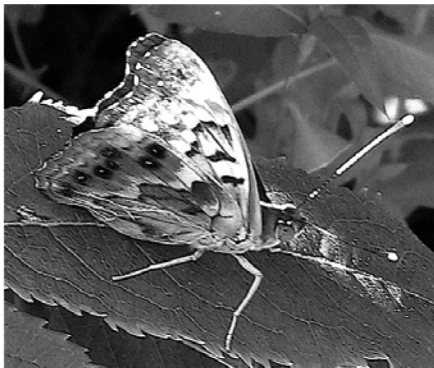
Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve Newsletter

NABA Butterfly Count in the Preserve

Counting Butterflies in the Preserve

On July 5th, as in each of the past 34 years, local butterfly enthusiasts headed out to identify and count all of the butterflies to be found in a 15-mile diameter circle centered at the State Capital. Data from similar counts conducted across the continent under the auspices of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA), which includes a Southeast Wisconsin chapter, enable butterfly populations to be monitored over time. As in other years, the Preserve was one of the Madison areas covered on count day (always close to July 4th) because the Preserve typically produces an interesting sampling of common and less expected species. Meadow Fritillary is a species usually found in the Preserve and nowhere else in the circle, a pattern that held true again this year.

Unfortunately, this has been a poor year for butterflies. Participants noticed a marked decrease in the total number of butterflies and the diversity of species. Last year's Preserve list was made by only two



Tawny emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*) (G Denniston)

observers in a much shorter time, yet there were almost twice as many species recorded. The most notable change was the absence of any Swallowtail species this year.

were found. Within the Preserve, the total count was as follows: Cabbage White (100), Clouded Sulphur (5), Banded Hairstreak (4), Eastern Tailed-Blue (1), Summer Azure (2), Meadow Fritillary (3), Hackberry Emperor (9), Tawny Emperor (1), Common Wood-Nymph (1), Monarch (6), Silver-Spotted Skipper (3),



Silver-spotted Skipper (G Denniston)

and European Skipper (1). By far the most numerous was the Cabbage White, an introduced species found in large numbers in the garden areas. Found last year, but not this year were: Pearl Crescent, Great Spangled Fritillary, Striped Hairstreak, American Lady, Red Admiral, Dun Skipper, Orange Sulphur, Black Swallowtail, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Mourning Cloak. For the entire Madison count area, the total number of species was 29 with 437 individuals.

Why the decrease in butterflies this year? Perhaps it was in part because of the hard winter, but this explanation does not hold for all the species affected. Several of the count participants believe that the low numbers are the result of the extensive and intensive aerial spraying of BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) done for Gypsy Moth control. BT is not known to be harmful to organisms other than caterpillars, but it is lethal to all Lepidoptera (butterflies and moth) caterpillars. BT does not specifically target Gypsy Moths caterpillars.