

# Kentucky Lepidopterist

Newsletter of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists

Volume 24, Number 3 July 1998

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### At Large Members

**Jessica Huttli**

**Loran Gibson**

**Reed Watkins**

**Eric Metzler**

## Fall Field Trip

September 11-13, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

**Friday** - Call Bill Black 1-502-442-9587 or e-mail Carolyn Roof - [gardener@sunsix.infi.net](mailto:gardener@sunsix.infi.net) for more information. We will figure something out.

**Saturday** gather - Denny's Restaurant, (Pear Tree Inn), Paducah, KY I-24 exit 4, 9:00 am

1. Great Purple Hairstreak site - Island Creek (collect sparingly)
2. Livingston Co., Cumberland River, Bissell Bluff (see Edward Sadler article)
3. Hybrid (Viceroy-Red-spotted Purple) Site, Fulton County, Mississippi River
4. Evening - Nothing

**Sunday** - If you have a special place to visit, call Bill and he will try to help you.

**Meals** - To save time, please bring lunch and dinner, drinks, snacks, etc. We will stop at a Minit-Mart type grocery along the way if need be, but will not go to a sit-down restaurant.

**Lodging:** East side of I-24, exit 4 - Days Inn; Courtyard by Marriott 1-800-321-2211; Drury 1-800-325-8300; Holiday Inn Express 1-800-HOLIDAY;

West side of I-24, exit 4 - Best Inns 1-800-BEST INN; Comfort Suites 1-800-228-5150; Drury Suites 1-800-325-8300; Pear Tree Inn 1-800-282-8733.

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held NOVEMBER 20-21

University of Louisville, 321 Life Sciences Building.

Friday - 7:00-11:00 p.m. - Social at the home of Charlie Covell

Saturday - 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. 321 Life Sciences Building, U of L.

9:00-12:00 Member get together

Noon Lunch on your own

1:00-5:00 p.m. Program: Les Ferge is scheduled to talk about the moths that he has collected in Wisconsin over the years; Charles Covell will talk about Lepidoptera in Ky. biodiversity inventory projects such as the one we have been doing in Mammoth Cave National Park this summer; and there is more.

? Dinner at Masterson's Restaurant

As usual, bring items for drawing and, of course, your "what is it's or "look what I found"

New members and young people are especially urged to come and participate.

For more information contact Dr. Charles V. Covell

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

According to our constitution, the purpose of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists is directed to efforts and activities that shall enhance, supplement and advance the growth of scientific knowledge of the Lepidoptera of Kentucky and surrounding areas.

Kentucky is among the minority of states having a comprehensive Lepidoptera checklist available or in preparation. This does not signal the end of our efforts, but marks only the beginning. One of the great things about studying Lepidoptera is that anyone can experience the thrill of discovery, without necessarily needing complicated equipment of a lot of money. There are all sorts of activities that are interesting, necessary and important, with life history studies or surveys of new localities and unique habitats being just a few examples of areas where great contributions can be made.

While the butterflies are as well known as any insect group, the state of knowledge of the remainder of the Lepidoptera is far from complete. There is an enormous amount of interesting habitat that has never benefited from the attention of a Lepidopterist. One of the things I find troublesome is the overuse and misuse of the term "rare". Time and again various species are proclaimed "rare" when in actual fact what is rare is the intense and time consuming effort to locate and document new populations in the field.

Rarity is often an artifact of insufficient searching, lack of knowledge of habitat or seasonal occurrence, or species not readily obtainable by customary collecting methods. In these times of growing concern over loss of biodiversity, I would urge that caution be exercised when attempting to rank rarity or associate with habitat based on limited experience and inadequate replication of records in other examples of similar habitat. Only by renewing our sense of purpose and resolving to ad new information, will we have any hope of knowing the true status of many of our Lepidoptera species, knowledge vital to directing scarce resources for conservation to where the greatest need is.

Les Ferge, President

## New Members & Changes

### New:

Randy Robinette, 7302 Midland Trail Road, Ashland, KY 41102-9294, phone 606-928-5349 (h and w).

"I do some butterfly gardening-stock seeds of some butterfly and moth foodplants. I also do some rearing and collecting."

### Change:

Ellis L. Laudermilk, KY Nature Preserves, new e-mail address is: laudermilk@nrepc.nr.state.ky.us

Stephanie McKown's new address is: P. O. Box 190685, Boise, ID 83709.

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## Member News

**Drop us a line or e-mail about what you are doing. It's nice to know what our members are doing.**

Eric Metsler (Member at Large, Executive Committee) read the above last month and wrote the following:

What I'm doing.

In the last newsletter you invited members to let you know what were doing. For the past several years, my interests focused on moths that live in prairies. I began this project in cooperation with the U.S. Air Force and The Nature Conservancy at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, home of Huffman Prairie where the Wright brothers learned how to build gliders and air planes. My study site is within sight of a reconstruction of one of their first hangers. Since 1992, when Roger Zebold (Metzler and Zebold, 1995) and Reed Watkins were collaborators at Huffman Prairie, my research now includes Big Island Wildlife Area and Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in Central Ohio, Resthaven Wildlife Area in Northern Ohio, and three prairies in Lucas County near Toledo, Ohio. In 1997, I inventoried the moths at six prairie sites for The Nature Conservancy in Newton Col., Indiana (NW part of the state), and in 1998, I'm inventorying seven more sites NW Indiana (Jasper and Pulaski Counties).

From 1992 through 1997, I systematically collected 253 samples in Ohio's remnant prairies.. Samples were collected at Huffman Prairie in Green County (96 samples), Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in Wyandot County (73 samples), Resthaven Wildlife Area in Erie County (30 samples), Big Island Wildlife Area in Marion County (8 samples), and Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve (16 samples), Kitty Todd Preserve (16 samples), and Oak Openings Metro Park (14 samples, all in Lucas County. Samples were taken on 126 night at 39 sites in the prairies. All specimens of moths (including all micro moths) from each sample were sorted to species and they were counted. All other insects are stored in alcohol for donation to the University of Wisconsin or the Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity.

More than 99 percent of the micro moths were spread and most were dissected for positive identification. I use a microscope to photograph each dissection and compare the moths and dissections with specimens at the Smithsonian Institution or the Canadian National Collection. The scientists at those institutions are extremely helpful. A lot of local experts also help me with identifications, including George Balogh, Charlie Covell, Dennis Currutt, Loran Gibson, Reed Watkins, Don Wright, and others.

So far I've recorded 41,600 moths, representing more than 900 species from Phil's prairies -- more than 50 of these species were previously unknown from Phil. One species, new to science, was described from Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area (Metzler, 1998).

Cont. on next page

This takes a lot of time, and it is now my full time occupation. Since I retired from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, I work full time on moths. It's a great life.

My research continues in Ohio and Indiana. Grants and financial assistance for these studies (to cover expenses) come from the Nature Conservancy, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wisconsin DNR,, and the Ohio Division of wildlife. Many of the funds are managed by the Ohio Biological Survey and the Midwest Biodiversity Institute.

#### Citations:

Metzler, Eric H., 1998. Presidential address 1997; a new species of *Lithophane* (Noctuidae) from the midwestern United States, dedicated to the purpose of The Lepidopterists' Society. *J. Lepid. Soc.* 52(1):1-8

Metzler, Eric H. and Roger A. Zebold. 1995. Twenty-eight species of moths new to Ohio from Huffman Prairie, Greene County (Lepidoptera). *Ohio J. Sci.* 95(3):240-242.

Eric Metzler, Columbus, OH

## Jim Merritt

(ed. note: The following e-mail was received just after the June issue went to press. It was from Charlie Covell to Phil J. Schappert)

Phil: I am sorry to announce the death on May 20 of Dr. James R. ("Jim") Merritt, at the age of 80. Jim had been in declining health for the past two years after a series of hip replacements and strokes.

He joined the Society in 1951, and served for several years as Editor of a feature in the original "NEWS" of a column known as "Especially for Field Collectors." He was the dean of the University of Louisville School of Law for several years, and the dean of Kentucky Lepidopterists from the time of his joining the Society. He was also a charter member of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists.

He is survived by his widow, Mary Lou of Louisville, and two daughters. All of us who knew him enjoyed his dry humor and great wit, and were inspired by his great enthusiasm for butterflies. Most of his collection is now part of the University of Louisville Insect Collection.

C.V. Covell Jr.

## MOTH PUPATES IN DEAD LANDSNAIL SHELL

by Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr.

In my capacity as a biologist for the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, I frequently collect dead shells of land snails to verify distribution records. On 26 October 1996, I collected a dead shell of *Mesodon laevis*, a small Polygyrid snail that is locally common in woodlands of central Kentucky. It was on a wooded slope near the Barren River, about one mile northeast of Holland, Kentucky.

I put this snail in a small container by itself, and stored it with others at the Commission's office. After several months had passed, I finally got round to typing handwritten collection information onto a new label. When I opened up the sealed container to insert the label, I found an adult *Harrisina americana*, grapeleaf skeletonizer moth, with the shell. This moth apparently had crawled inside the snail as a larva and pupated inside it, emerging only after I had collected the snail from the forest floor.

One wonders how often such refugia are used by lepidoptera for pupation. It is also curious to consider that the pupa might have overwintered in the shell had I not collected it in late fall.

## Garden Tips

by Carolyn Roof

Sometimes we know better but....

Several years ago, The Garden Club of Kentucky promoted butterfly gardening and as the state meeting was to be in Paducah, I thought that I should put in a butterfly garden but had only two weeks in April in which the bed could be dug, flag stone walk laid, and plants installed.

The garden was lovely, but unlike "A Field of Dreams", they did not come.

What happened? The sunny April bed became a partial to full shade June bed. Not only does the sun move during the year, trees leaf out. Lesson one.

All of the recommended nectar plants had been selected. Among them was petunia "Purple Wave". The variety had been selected because it was the first year of availability of the stunning creeping petunia that had been named All America Selection. Nectar is more important than AAS. The best plants are those that you are given from a friend's garden that attracts butterflies. Lesson Two.

Plants were selected because they were on all of the accepted butterfly gardening lists, not to attract specific butterflies at specific times. Lesson three.

What I learned was that the garden was planted for the butterflies, not me. I still enjoy the "Butterfly Garden" just outside the kitchen door. The real butterfly garden is the entire yard. Their plants are scattered throughout, not just in one place. They seem to enjoy it more that way.

# Birds, Bunnies, & Butterflies

by Dr. Charles V. Covell

This year in the Covell back yard at 2333 Brighton Drive, Louisville, KY, the butterfly bushes have bloomed early and the bushes grown large. The one very cold night this past winter, which was in March, did not kill the *Buddleia* canes - only the leaves, which had weathered the winter to that point. Yet the number of butterflies I have seen there so far this year seem below par.

In addition to the butterfly bushes, I put out three small *Lantana* plants (weeds in Florida, but a bit pricey here), a *Penta*, four purple coneflowers (*Rudbeckia*), and two flats of zinnias. I then left for Costa Rica and the Galapagos on May 15, returning June 2. When I got back, the four coneflowers and most of the zinnias had been eaten down by rabbits. I have taken measures to protect a couple of the surviving plants by screening them with chickenwire; and they are growing normally. The coneflowers are barely alive, despite ample (maybe too much) rain, and the other plants mentioned above are fine. My bee balm (*Monarda*) are doing fine, but are so crowded by the greenery of spring monocots like iris and daffodils that the blasted bun-buns cannot seem to get to them.

I also fed the birds with a cylindrical plastic hanging feeder, all winter and well into the spring. Actually, I did so until last week. About every time I would go out to the garden there was a large number of birds among the butterfly bushes, which are not pretty large. And yesterday I noticed a cardinal's nest in the middle of one of them. Most of these birds were seed eaters, I think, waiting for me to refill the feeder (it was getting so I had to refill it daily). Now I have the message; so down came the feeder until late fall. I think the birds are at least scaring away the butterflies; and some were probably dining on them.

So far I have seen the following butterfly species in our yard, most on the butterfly bushes:

Silver-spotted Skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*), Cabbage Butterfly (*Pieris rapae*), Alfalfa Butterfly (*Colias eurytheme*), Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon*), Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*), and Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*).

That's it! I am sure there will be more. I found 19 species last year, and 29 the year before. Part of the difference is weather, and another is my lack of time to observe during the day. Also, the year is increasingly shaded by enlarging trees. But butterflies do seem down a bit overall, so far (as of July 1, 1998). The midsummer increase is just starting, and should be ample.

Stay tuned. Cheers,  
Charlie

# Backyard Sightings

by Dr. Charles Covell

Each summer I check my backyard butterfly garden. Below is my list of 22 species with the date first seen and remarks about the activity of the butterflies when sighted. For comparison, in 1996, I record 29 species all season, and last year only 19. With a fine fall flight just beginning, I would not be surprised to beat the 1996 total. But here is the list so far in order of appearance:

SPECIES	First sighted
Cabbage White <i>Pieris rapae</i>	March 29
Summer Azure, <i>Celastrina neglecta</i>	June 3
the two above flying in yard	
the next six nectaring on buddleia	
Alfalfa Butterfly, <i>Colias eurytheme</i>	June 12
Silver-spotted Skipper, <i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	June 12
Great Spangled Fritillary, <i>Speyeria cybele</i>	June 22
Red Admiral, <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	June 28
Wild Indigo Duskywing, <i>Erynnis baptisiae</i>	July 2
American Painted Lady, <i>Banessa virginensis</i>	July 3
Least Skipper, <i>Ancyloxypha numitor</i>	July 3
resting in watered lawn	
the next three nectaring on buddleia	
Horace's Duskywing, <i>Erynnis horatius</i>	July 3
Common Woodnymph, <i>Cercyonis pegala</i>	July 3
Red-spotted Purple, <i>Limenitis arthemis astyanax</i>	July 3
Monarch, <i>Danaus plexippus</i>	July 3
on milkweed, possibly ovipositing	
Common sulfur, <i>Colias philodice</i>	July 4
nectaring on buddleia	
Peck's Skipper, <i>Polites peckius</i>	July 4
on unidentified plant leaf	
Eastern Tigger Swallowtail, <i>Pterourus glaucus</i>	July 6
nectaring on buddleia	
Sachem Skipper, <i>Atalopedes campestris</i>	July 6
nectaring on buddleia.	
Question Mark, <i>Polygonia interrogationis</i>	July 9
on leaf of unidentified plant	
Eastern Tailed Blue, <i>Everes compyntas</i>	July 10
flying amid water sprinkler	
Gray Hairstreak, <i>Strymon melinus</i>	July 21
perched on petunia blossom	
Fiery Skipper, <i>Hylephila phyleus</i>	August 21
nectaring on buddleia	
Black Swallowtail, <i>Papilio polyxenes asterius</i>	August 22
nectaring on buddleia	
Northern Broken Dash, <i>Wallengrenia egeremet</i>	August 22
3/4 grown larva also found on dill plant.	

(ed. note: obviously butterflies like butterfly bushes)

# More Member News

Drop us a line or e-mail about what you are doing. It's nice to know what our members are doing.

Another bit of interesting news: Our member in Woodford County, **Sean Lube**, called to say that he saw a Gulf Fritillary, *Agraulis vanillae*, flying around a passionvine he had planted in his yard. Later he discovered it was a female, and found eggs on the plant. He hopes to have the second known country record for a breeding colony. The first was discovered in 1989 in Paducah by Bill Black.

Secretary of the Society, **John Enz**, successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on bumblebee pollination biology of July 9. He has left to take a faculty position in the Biology Department at Alderson Broaddus College in West Virginia. We congratulate John and wish him well, but will certainly miss him. He plans to at least complete his term as Secretary and will visit Kentucky often, he says.

**Paul Florence** has accepted a full-time Biology faculty position at Jefferson Community College in Louisville. He continues his doctoral studies with Charlie Covell, comparing moth populations in 3 nature preserves in southeastern Kentucky. His address remains the same for the present.

In the latter half of May, **Charlie Covell** spent a week working on the Geometridae collection at INBio, the National Institute for Biodiversity, in San Jose, Costa Rica. This was followed by 2 days in Quito, Ecuador and 10 days in the Galapagos Islands, collecting and preparing moths for a book on the Galapagos Lepidoptera to be coauthored by host scientist at the Charles Darwin Research Station, Lazaro Roque, and Dr. Bernard Landry of Ontario, Canada.

## 14th July 4th Count

by Charlie Covell

The count was to have been on Saturday, July 4, 1998, but it was rainy and cloudy, so I went to the jumping-off point in Brownsboro, KY, at 9:30 to tell the group there we would try again in the morning. On Sunday, we met again at the Brownsboro General Store and commenced identifications and counting at 10:00 a.m., ending at 3:00 p.m.

It was a fairly comfortable day, with high about 82 degrees. The only SKL member to attend besides me was Charles Wright; but there were five other people there with us, and three others who could not find us.

### Butterflies with numbers recorded were as follows: Hesperiidae (Skippers)

Silver-spotted Skipper, <i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	6
Horace's Dusky Wing, <i>Erynnis horatius</i>	3
Wild Indigo Dusky Wing, <i>Erynnis baptisiae</i>	15
Peck's Skipper, <i>Polites peckius</i>	7
Dark Brown Dash, <i>Wallengrenia egeremet</i>	2
Sachem Skipper, <i>Atalopedes campestris</i>	4
Little Glassywing, <i>Pompeius verna</i>	1

### Papilionidae (Swallowtails)

Pipevine Swallowtail, <i>Battus philenor</i>	22
Black Swallowtail, <i>Papilio polyxenes asterius</i>	1
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, <i>Pterourus glaucus</i>	130
Spicebush Swallowtail, <i>Pterourus troilus</i>	3

### Pieridae (Sulfurs and Whites)

Cabbage Butterfly, <i>Pieris rapae</i>	16
Common Sulfur, <i>Colias philodice</i>	10
Alfalfa Butterfly, <i>Colias eurytheme</i>	42

### Lycaenidae (Hairstreaks and Blues)

Edwards' Hairstreak, <i>Satyrrium edwardsii</i>	4
Olive Hairstreak, <i>Callophrys grynea</i>	10
Gray Hairstreak, <i>Strymon melinus</i>	1
Eastern Tailed Blue, <i>Everes comyntas</i>	96
Summer Azure, <i>Celastrina meglecta</i>	3

### Riodinidae (Metalmarks)

Northern Metalmark, <i>Calephelis borealis</i>	3
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### Libytheidae (Snouts)

Snout Butterfly, <i>Libythea carmineta</i> (formerly <i>bachmanii</i> )	1
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### Nymphalidae (Brushfooted Butterflies)

Great Spangled Fritillary, <i>Speyeria cybele</i>	333
Meadow Fritillary, <i>Boloria bellona</i>	15
Pearl Crescent, <i>Phyciodes tharos</i>	213
Question Mark, <i>Polygonia interrogationis</i>	1
Red Admiral, <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	1
Red-spotted Purple, <i>Limenitis arthemis astyanax</i>	1
Tawny Emperor, <i>Asterocampa clyton</i>	2

### Satyridae (Satyrs and Wood Nymphs)

Little Wood Satyr, <i>Megisto cymela</i>	95
Common Wood Nymph, <i>Cercyonis pegala</i>	62

Totals: 30 species, 688 individuals. This was down a bit in numbers, but I was the only one to identify most species while others recorded or brought netted individuals for identification. The season was ahead of normal by one to two weeks.

## New Member

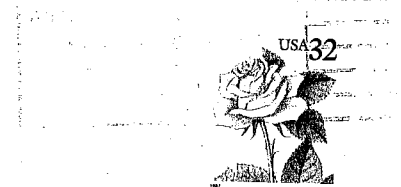
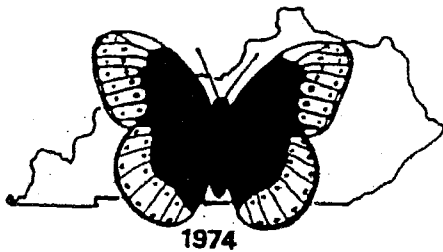
James A. Bess, OTIS Enterprises, 13501 South 750 West,  
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The Kentucky Lepidopterist Newsletter is published quarterly - January, April, July, and October.  
Annual membership dues of \$10.00, are payable at the Annual Meeting In November or by mailing to the Treasurer.

# Calendar of Events

September 11-13 Fall Field Trip - Paducah  
November 20-21 Annual Meeting - Louisville

Bill Black  
Charlie Covell



## Newsletter of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists

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