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THE OHIO LEPIDOPTERISTS

LONG-TERM MONITORING OF BUTTERFLIES

NEWSLETTER FOR MAY 2009

Highlights

- 2009 monitoring workshop report (page 2)
- Highlights of the 2008 season (page 3)
- New Google group for fans of Ohio Lepidoptera (page 4)

2010 Monitoring Workshop March 27 at Penitentiary Glen

Mark your calendar today and plan to attend next year's monitoring workshop at Penitentiary Glen in Lake County. There will be an emphasis on butterfly gardening, taking advantage of the fact that Penitentiary Glen has a butterfly garden and Holden Arboretum has a huge one just down the road. Registration information will be forthcoming in our December newsletter.

The Long-term Butterfly Monitoring project is sponsored by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, and by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Once again we thank both for their support, without which the program could not exist in its present form.

LTBM Website: <http://www.ohiolepidopterists.org/bflymonitoring/>

Butterfly Monitoring Workshop Report

The 2009 butterfly monitoring workshop was held at The University of Findlay on March 21. This was the 12th annual training event for butterfly monitors. The workshop included a full day of identification training along with highlights of the 2008 season, data analysis, awards and presentations on a variety of other topics ranging from how to set up a transect, looks at a couple of transects, caterpillars, where to find rare (to Ohio) butterflies, how butterflies overwinter, the effect of temperature on emergence, and what invertebrates and plants are hazards to monitors. It takes a “flutter” of Ohio Lepidopterists to conduct this training every year. Thanks this year are due to Dave Parshall, John Cooper, Leslie Angel, Kerr Gibson, Mike Gilligan, Steve Smith, Susan Wiedmann, Susan Gallagher, Dale Rhoda, Steve Sommer, Don Reuter, Rick Ruggles and Jerry Wiedmann. Dwight Moody was particularly helpful with the local arrangements. The facilities were great and The University of Findlay cafeteria provided the widest selection for lunch that we have ever had. Attendance was 73 people.

The initial purpose of the first workshop in 1998 was to provide guidance on how to set up and monitor a transect and how to identify the butterflies. Over the years several other benefits have evolved. The workshop is heavily attended by parks and natural areas staff and volunteers who need to learn butterfly identification. We may be the only group in the US providing this kind of service. The workshop also meets the needs of long term monitors who wish to refresh their identification skills, network with other monitors or look at data trends etc. We continue to attract laymen who are just interested in butterflies. Typically 1/3 of the attendees are there for the first time. This year we opened the sessions to students by waiving the registration fee and had 5 individuals take advantage of that opportunity. This is an important outreach since identification is no longer being taught in college courses and we plan to continue it in the future.

The next workshop will be on March 27, 2010 at Penitentiary Glen Nature Center in Lake County (Kirtland, OH) as guests of Lake Metroparks. Penitentiary Glen is home of one of the 3 oldest continuously monitored transects and has been monitored since 1996. Look for registration details in the December newsletter.

- *Jerry Wiedmann*

Reminders for Monitors from the Data Entry Volunteers

1. Use numbers (not check marks, dots or hash marks) on a legible Ohio Leps record sheet.
2. If duplicate counts are made in one week, either send both with the preferred one indicated or send only one. Duplicate counts are not entered into the database.
3. We are still receiving poor copies of the original records. Please be sure your data are legible.

Thanks!

- *Barb Coleman*

2008 Monitoring Highlights

Condensed from the highlights presentation at the annual workshop on March 21, 2009. These are the numbers of sites reporting the butterfly. In some cases like Dreamy and Sleepy Duskywings the numbers have dropped severely as well. Both of the Northern Hairstreaks were county records. Northern Hairstreaks had previously been seen only in 1999 and 2005. The Aphrodite and Indian Skipper have declined sharply in Northeastern Ohio in the last 10 years.

Butterfly	Number of Sites Observing the Butterfly			
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Cloudless Sulfur	4	22	15	16
Variegated Fritillary	4	4	7	8
Northern Hairstreak	3	0	0	2
Karner Blue	0	1	2	2
Striped Hairstreak	3	5	6	9
Sachem	4	7	5	11
White M Hairstreak	2	10	8	3
Common Buckeye	15	21	36	25
Checkered White	0	2	2	2
Sleepy Orange	1	1	1	3
Dreamy Duskywing	6	7	8	4
Sleepy Duskywing	7	5	8	3
Aphrodite (8 in 1999)	7	7	6	4
Aphrodite – NEO (6 in 1999)	2	1	1	0
Indian Skipper (4 in 1999)	0	0	1	0
Milbert's Tortoise Shell	2	3	3	0
Common Roadside Skipper	3	4	4	0
Henry's Elfin	4	3	3	0

Eyed Brown	7	3	4	2
American Copper	11	13	12	4
Juniper Hairstreak	3	4	3	1

- *Jerry Wiedmann*

New OH-LEPS Google Group Facilitates E-mail Among Ohio Lep Lovers

The Ohio Lepidopterists are pleased to announce the launch of a new free e- Mail list serve that can help facilitate communication among people interested in Ohio butterflies and moths. The list serve will be run using Google Groups free software and the administrator will be Dale Rhoda. People around the state can feel free to e-mail their latest sightings, questions, or field trip announcements. Feel free to respond to each other's questions, so we can all help each other learn.

Things that might prompt you to send an e-mail to the list serve:

1. Have a good day in the field? Send out your species list to inspire others.
2. Have a question about an ID? Upload your ID question photos to the 'Files' area. Send that question along.
3. Did you see some interesting lepidopteran behavior in the field? Send that along.
4. Are you planning a field trip or 4th of July Butterfly Count? Want some company? Send out an announcement.

The list serve will be successful if you read it and post to it. Otherwise it will be inactive. Please use it as a resource and pass the word along to others. You do NOT need to be a dues-paying member of the Ohio Lepidopterists to join the list serve. All are welcome. The more the merrier!

To join, visit the 'About' page on the TOL website (www.ohiolepidopterists.org). Scroll down to the Google Groups box, type in your e-mail address and click 'Subscribe'. You'll start receiving the OH-LEPS e-mail messages right away. You may then post a message to the group by sending e-mail to oh-leps@googlegroups.com. You may only post messages from e-mail addresses that are subscribed to the list serve. Members may also upload photos to the group's 'Files' area and may log in to Google groups and change their preferences to receive messages individually, or in one 'digest' message at the end of each day.

If you are not sure if you want to subscribe, you can always read the messages from a web browser without joining. Simply visit <http://groups.google.com/group/oh-leps/> to see what sorts of messages are being exchanged. (Or click the 'Visit this Group' link in the Google Groups box on the About page on the TOL website.)

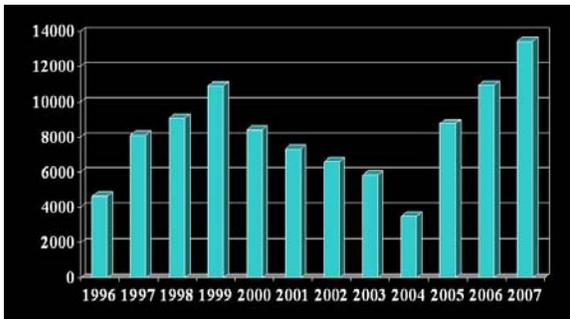
Contact Dale Rhoda if you have any questions. His e-mail address is rhoda.4@osu.edu.

- *Dale Rhoda*

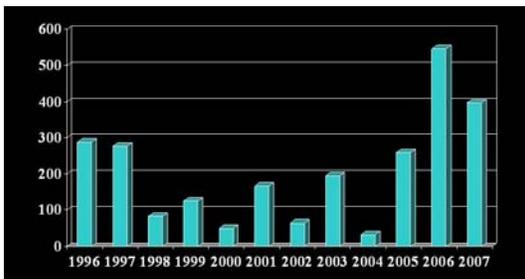
More tales from the database

By popular demand, here is a summary of Dale Rhoda's presentation at the March workshop.

Once again, we reviewed our longest-running transects. There are three of these from northeastern Ohio (Huntoon Park, Penitentiary Glen and Terra Vista) that have 12 continuous years of data. If we total all butterflies exclusive of coppers, hairstreaks, blues and skippers, we see these annual totals:

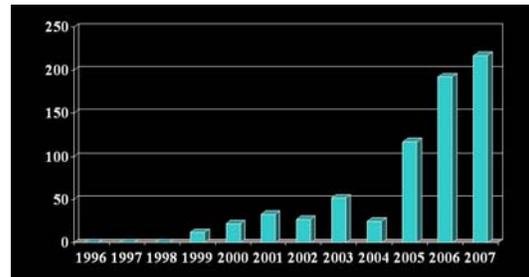


After 2004 we wondered whether butterflies were declining, but apparently numbers rebounded more recently. This is borne out in trends of individual species; numbers seem to fluctuate year-to-year, perhaps in response to some environmental factor(s) that we have yet to identify. This is encouraging for conservationists, because it is evidence that populations of most butterflies are very resilient. Consider the Monarch:



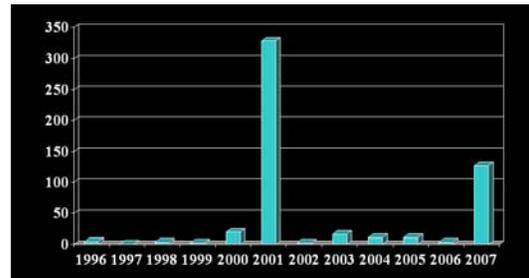
The graph here is from the same three 12-year transects, and as nearly as we can tell, Monarchs have recovered from the huge die-off of the early 2000's.

Amid all the ups and downs our monitoring program is able to track trends for which we know specific causes. For example, here are trends for Wild Indigo Dusky Wing:



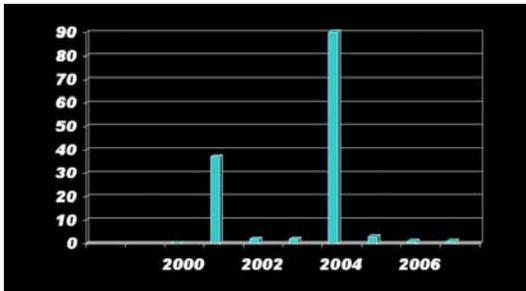
This skipper recently expanded its larval host plant preference to include Crown Vetch, widely planted as an ornamental and to stabilize soil in road cuts. It has become much more abundant as a result.

Some butterflies are known to be "irruptive" and undergo large population increases for reasons that remain obscure. The Red Admiral is an example:

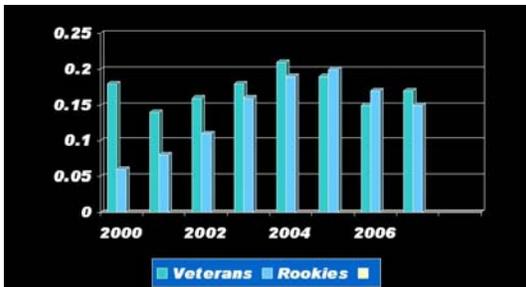


The monitoring program clearly detected increases in Red Admiral populations in 2001 and 2007. Cycles like this are documented back to the early 19th century, and remain to be explained.

So why did I exclude hairstreaks, coppers, blues and skippers? I don't want to alienate any monitors, but the data are less reliable. I monitor two transects, and I confess: I cannot identify every skipper (especially dusky-wings) with accuracy while they're flying and I often haven't the time to net each one. As to the little blue jobs, I know that I miss more of them than I do, say, swallowtails. To illustrate this, below is a graph of data submitted by an anonymous monitor, regarding dusky-wing "Species A."



Dusky-wings simply don't display that much variability. As to the blues, etc., I assembled the following graph showing the difference in detectability of blues:



Some definitions are in order: a "veteran" is someone who had at least three years of monitoring experience. A "rookie" had only a year or two (so there are different "rookies" in the pool for each year, and some of the "rookies" were "veterans" by 2002).

Clearly, some butterflies are harder to detect and identify than others, so the data may not have as much statistical validity, but take heart: We still need to know what species are where. Through monitoring, we can detect an incursion of butterflies such as White-M Hairstreak, and two of our monitors (Islay Cowie and Kerr Gibson) found a state-record dusky-wing (Funereal Dusky-wing) last year. So keep counting those numerical challenges: Hairstreaks, coppers, blues and skippers.

Many thanks to Dale Rhoda for presenting this information at the monitoring workshop while I was away.

- Dave Horn

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