

FARMINGTON VALLEY BUTTERFLY COUNT SUMMARY

July 23, 2022

Following the 2021 Farmington Valley Butterfly Count, during which the weather was absolutely delightful throughout the day, this one was a scorcher with temperatures hitting 90 by lunchtime. In spite of the oppressive heat and a lack of rain that put much of Connecticut, including the Farmington Valley into moderate drought conditions, our Count was a great success with excellent participation. Several new areas, including Rosedale Farm, received coverage, and next year, we will attempt to add the Meadowood property in Simsbury. This year's Count was dedicated to the memory of David Leff, a longtime Count participant, who passed away in May 2022. We greatly missed David's wit and enthusiasm this year!

Participation and coverage was exceptional on a brutally hot day, with 22 observers in 11 parties covering 33 miles in 48 hours. In comparison, last year, we had 21 observers in 13 parties, covering 32 miles in 53 hours under much more comfortable conditions. We totaled 36 species for the Count, one more than last year!

Butterfly numbers decreased a bit from last year, going from 1,385 to 1,211, but this is not at all surprising in that activity diminished quickly as the temperature rose through the eighties. As is always the case in our area, a majority of our butterflies were cabbage whites and pearl crescents, accounting for 41.4% of butterflies tallied. Rounding out the top five were common ringlet (92), silver-spotted skipper (84) and monarch (81). Interestingly, the week prior to our Count, the monarch butterfly was added to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s endangered species list. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has not added the monarch to its list at this time. Brushfoots remained scarce, as we reported no mourning cloaks, and failed to find a painted lady for the third year in a row. Anglewings were also scarce, with but a single question mark and two eastern commas reported. In addition to mourning cloak, meadow fritillary and black dash, found in 2021, also went missing this year. On the other hand, American copper, banded hairstreak, Peck's and least skippers, missed last year, were found on this year's Count.

A couple of notes of interest: Although great spangled fritillary is being found in fewer numbers and meadow fritillary was not found this year, the more habitat-restricted silver-bordered fritillary continues to increase. Whether or not this is the result of a population increase or from a better understanding of where to find them is not yet clear. While we lament the loss of Canton's Applegate Farm, our original site for common sootywing, it appears that this diminutive butterfly does like farmland. We now cover three sootywing locations. All three have had their development rights preserved, ensuring that sootywings should continue to appear on this Count.

Going forward, we continue to discover new sites within our Count circle. There are concerns however, particularly with the rampant growth of invasive plants like Oriental bittersweet and Japanese knotweed, to name but two, overwhelming what were once fields filled with nectar producing plants. The increasing use of pesticides to combat mosquitos and ticks cannot help but suppress populations of many other insect species, butterflies included. What this Count will look like in the years to come remains to be seen.

Species and Totals for this year's Count are as follows (last year's numbers in red and in parentheses):

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Black Swallowtail 9 (8) | 21. Appalachian Brown 10 (7) |
| 2. E. Tiger Swallowtail 62 (23) | 22. Little Wood Satyr 4 (1) |
| 3. Spicebush Swallowtail 13 (23) | 23. Common Ringlet 92 (29) |
| 4. Cabbage White 318 (436) | 24. C. Wood Nymph 28 (49) |
| 5. Clouded Sulphur 66 (43) | 25. Monarch 81 (107) |
| 6. Orange Sulphur 16 (13) | 26. Silver-spotted Skipper 84 (80) |
| 7. American Copper 4 (0) | 27. W. Indigo Duskywing 49 (21) |
| 8. Banded Hairstreak 3 (0) | 28. Common Sootywing 10 (3) |
| 9. Eastern-tailed Blue 13 (7) | 29. Least Skipper 1 (0) |
| 10. Spring Azure 2 (9) | 30. Peck's Skipper 26 (0) |
| 11. Great Spangled Fritillary 13 (5) | 31. N. Broken Dash 19 (13) |
| 12. Silver Bordered Fritillary 19 (5) | 32. Little Glassywing 1 (1) |
| 13. Pearl Crescent 207 (430) | 33. Tawny-edged Skipper 3 (4) |
| 14. Eastern Comma 2 (2) | 34. Mulberry Wing 6 (12) |
| 15. Question Mark 1 (3) | 35. Broad-winged Skipper 7 (7) |
| 16. American Lady 6 (7) | 36. Dun Skipper 63 (17) |
| 17. Red Admiral 5 (8) | |
| 18. Common Buckeye 2 (1) | Total Butterflies: 1,268 |
| 19. Red-spotted Purple 6 (1) | |
| 20. Viceroy 17 (6) | |

Total butterflies seen: 1,268 (1,385 seen in 2021). This marks the 27th year for this Count.

Observers: Jenny Abel, Glenn Barger, Nick Barnett, Gabrielle Bugden, Will Bugden, Paul Cianfaglione, Katrina Cirilli, Mia Cirilli, Mike Cirilli, Nancy Cirilli, Shannon Cirilli, Holly Hambleton, Greg Hanisek, Jay Kaplan, Josh Kaplan, Kate Kaplan, Jamie Meyers, Andrew Palaia, Maggie Peretto, Isaac Rosenthal, Zellene Sandler, Tom Yanik.

Hope everyone had a great time. We'll hope to do it again next year

Jay Kaplan, Compiler
Farmington Valley Butterfly Count