



Heard it through the Pipevine



Jan /
Feb
2006

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

Dan Hardy and Mike Quinn once again deliver great scoops on butterflies. Dan tells us about Elbow-Bush and spring butterflies, and Mike tells us about 2005's amazing new butterfly records. Mike has also put together an extensive calendar of events of interest to us bug lovers. Enjoy!

Time to Renew Your Membership!

We've almost completed our transition to a calendar year membership renewal, and now almost everyone's membership dues are due (unless already paid). The cost is \$20 per household. The fee for new members joining later in the year is pro-rated on a quarterly basis: from April to June it's \$15, from July to Sept. it's \$10, and from October to December it's \$5.

Club Meeting

Monday January 23, 7:00 pm

Zilker Botanical Garden Center

Dale Clark comes down from his butterfly ranch in Dallas to tell us "**The Joys and Heartaches of Butterfly Farming.**" His ranching business, Butterflies Unlimited, supplies live exhibits (no releases) all over the country with over 50 (!) different species of butterflies and moths from Texas. Passionate about butterflies since childhood, he started the business upon seeing his first live butterfly exhibit, thinking "they must get those pupae from somewhere!" -- more than a decade after obtaining a degree in English literature (at North Texas State University). Dale is also the incoming editor of the News of the Lepidopterists Society and co-founder of the Dallas County Lepidopterists' Society.



Elbow-Bush flowers (D. Hardy)

Elbow-Bush & Spring Butterflies

by Dan Hardy

The Elbow-Bush (*Forestiera pubescens*) blooms in late winter and early spring, hence its alternate name, Spring Herald. This is the bush to watch for in February. Find a few and start checking them right now. Although I know where they are, I miss their bloom period some years when I check too late. So you can't start monitoring too early. The bloom period of Agarita and Redbuds overlaps or follows Elbow-Bush.

The Spanish name is Cruzilla, which means little cross. Cross and Elbow refer the abrupt right-angle that each twig makes with the main stem. The twigs and leaves are usually arranged opposite one another. The main stems make a gentle arch through the underbrush. Small yellow flowers sprout in clusters from the main stem before any leaves come out. In fact, if you find a bush with leaves, then you've already missed the flowering period.

If you catch this bush in full flower on a warm, sunny day in February or early March, you will usually find lots of butterflies. There are many Elbow Bushes at the Zilker Butterfly Garden along the trail going

down toward the Dinosaur Garden. There is a particularly large bush behind the iron bench. Its flowers are a magnet for hairstreaks. Juniper and Great Purple Hairstreaks can often be numerous. Hairstreaks generally allow close approach for photographs. I usually find Henry's Elfin on Elbow-Bush. Henry's Elfins have only one brood each year and only fly during late February and March.



Eight-spotted Forester (J. Lapp)

As you search Elbow-Bushes you'll often find bees, wasps and two colorful day-flying moths, the Grapevine Epimenis and Eight-Spotted Foresters. The Grapevine Epimenis (with the terrific scientific name, *Psychomorpha epimenis*), is black with one large white spot on the forewing and one red patch on the hindwing. The Eight-spotted Forester has two cream-colored spots on the forewing and two white spots on the hindwing.

Thank You!

We owe great thanks to our outgoing board members, **Myrna Kepford**, who served as VP of Community Relations and Publicity, and **Debbie Russell**, who served as Membership and Volunteer Coordinator. Both diligently helped boost the club up to the next level of operation.

Thank you also **Lois Schubert** for serving as food coordinator in 2005.

And we can't forget to thank **Doris Hill** for organizing a fantastic Christmas Dinner and **Debbie Russell** for doing such a great job of decorating. Thanks to everyone for participating and for bringing such yummy dishes.

New Officers for 2006

We welcome two new officers to the board for 2006. **Julia Marsden** is now VP, Membership and Volunteer Coordination, and **Mary Quinn** is now VP, Community Relations and Publicity. Thank you both for stepping up to help.



Four-spotted Sailor (J. Dauphin)

The First Seven Days of December

by Mike Quinn

One doesn't usually think of the early December as a particularly good time to watch butterflies, but the first seven days of December 2005 saw a flurry of three new United States butterfly records in Mission Texas, more specifically at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and at the NABA International Butterfly Park. All three species were seen by many observers thanks to shouting, walkie-talkies, and cell phones!

The first new record was a somewhat worn male Four-spotted Sailor (*Dynamine postverta*) seen and ID'ed by Terry Fuller and David Hanson on December 03, 2005 at the NABA Butterfly Park which is located a mile east of Bentsen-RGV SP. (David is the veteran of multiple new US butterfly records in south Texas, but said that he was more than happy to concede credit for the initial sighting to Terry.) The Four-eyed Sailor is similar to the Blue-eyed Sailor of the same

genus which on occasion has strayed into north Texas.

When delving into the life history details of tropical butterflies, I think most people first reach for Phil DeVries' two volumes on The Butterflies of Costa Rica and Their Natural History. (Incidentally, Phil received his Ph.D. at UT, Austin back in 1987.) Among other facts, Phil mentions that *D. postverta* (formerly *D. mylitta*) is the most common of the Central American members of this genus, that the larvae feed on *Tragia* and *Dalechampia* (family Euphorbiaceae), and that the larvae are specialist feeders that can be classified as bud predators.

As often happens along the border, stray butterflies come over in a wave, so it wasn't too surprising that a second individual of this species was seen at Bentsen-RGV SP on December 7th. (See Jan Dauphin's photo of a fresh female Four-spotted Sailor.) It appears that conditions were favorable for other species to stray as well. On December 6th, a worn female Painted White (*Pieriballia viardi*) showed

up at Bentsen-RGV SP and on the 7th a fresh Broad-tipped Clearwing (*Pteronymia cotytto*) was photographed back at the NABA Park.

I could find almost no life history information on these latter two species, but one thing that is rather remarkable are the dates of the US clearwing records. A different new US clearwing, the Thick-tipped Greta (*Greta morgane*) hit the Valley back on December 08, 2004, almost a year to the day prior to the 2005 clearwing! What's even more surprising is that it had been almost exactly 100 years prior to that since the last US clearwing was recorded: it was July 1904, in Brownsville, and the butterfly was a female Klug's Clearwing (*Dircenna klugii*).

Given that there have been some 11 (!) new US butterfly records in south Texas over the last three years, we may not have to wait 100 years for the next clearwing to be seen this side of the Rio Grande which clearly is a good thing!



Broad-tipped Clearwing (*Pteronymia cotytto*)
NABA Butterfly Park, Mission, Texas (J. Dauphin)
New U.S. Record, December 7, 2005

Entomological Calendar

Mike Quinn brings you a more extensive calendar of entomological events, focusing on events of possible interest to us bug-lovin' folks here in central Texas. For an even more complete listing, see the calendar on his web site at www.texasento.net/events.htm.

– JANUARY –

- Mon 23** **Austin Butterfly Forum Meeting** – Zilker Botanical Garden Center, 7 - 9pm
Dale Clark, founding member of the Dallas County LepSoc will present on "The Joys and Heartaches of Butterfly Farming" (For more info, see pg. 1.)

– FEBRUARY –

- Sun 5** **Annual Guano Gathering** – Bracken Bat Cave, 11am - 4pm
Unique event at Bat Conservation International's Bracken Bat Cave - Natural Bridge Caverns Road, north side of San Antonio. Contact Jim Kennedy jkennedy@batcon.org - (512) 327-9721 for more info
- 19 - 22** **El Cielo Nature Festival** – Cd. Mante, Tamaulipas, Mexico
Sponsored by McAllen and Brownsville Chambers of Commerce. More info at: www.elcielofestival.com - sortiz@teledinamica.com.mx
- Sat 25** **Native Plant Spring Symposium** – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 8:30am - 5:30pm
Hear a variety of talks on current biological research as related to native plant ecology. More info at www.wildflower.org - (512) 292-4200
- Sun 26** **Green Garden Festival** – Zilker Botanical Garden, 1pm - 4:30pm
Talks on maintaining an attractive, economical AND earth-friendly yard. Speakers include John Dromgoole. Free event sponsored by the City of Austin. For info call 974-2550
- Mon 27** **Insect EXPO** – Montopolis Recreation Center
Sponsored by the Southwestern Branch of the Entomological Society of America, this youth educational event at the Montopolis Rec. Center (1200 Montopolis Dr.) will teach children (4th & 5th graders) about insects. Mike Quinn will have a table and talk about monarchs. Contact him at 912-7079 if you'd like to help.
- Mon 27** **Austin Butterfly Forum Meeting** – Zilker Botanical Garden Center, 7 - 9pm
John Ingram, award winning photographer will speak on butterfly photography.

continued...

– MARCH –

25 - 26

ZILKER GARDEN FESTIVAL – Zilker Botanical Garden, 10am - 5pm

This annual has something for every member of the family. ABF will have a table and will sell tickets, \$3 in advance and \$5 at the door. Volunteers needed!!! For additional information, call 477-8672 ext. 10 or email info@zilker garden.org

Mon 27

Austin Butterfly Forum Meeting – Zilker Botanical Garden Center, 7 - 9pm

Kim Garwood and Richard Lehman will give a presentation on the butterflies of northeastern Mexico. They will have copies of their book on the same topic for sale.

– APRIL –

7 - 9

ENTOBLITZ – Independence Creek Preserve

Held by the Texas A&M University, Department of Entomology. Collect/watch insects on the Nature Conservancy's 19,740 acre Independence Creek Preserve in Terrell County, 22 miles south of Sheffield, off IH-10 in west Texas. Contact Glené Mynhardt for more info at 979-458-4362 or glene@tamu.edu

8 - 9

Spring Plant Sale & Gardening Festival – Lady Bird Wildflower Center

This unique sale features more than 23,000 hard-to-find natives and 300 plant species. (details to be announced) - www.wildflower.org – Ph: 292-4200

Sat 15

Austin Nature Day – many events throughout Austin

This is a new annual event designed to celebrate the beauty, vitality, and diversity of our natural resources. Over 20 organizations at over 15 locations in the Greater Austin will give free programs. - www.austinnatureday.org

Mon 24

Austin Butterfly Forum Meeting – Zilker Botanical Garden Center, 7 - 9pm

Dr. Jean Krejca will give a presentation on the cave invertebrates of Central Texas and beyond.

– MAY –

Sat 6

Austin Butterfly Forum Butterfly Watching and Gardening Workshop – Zilker Botanical Garden Center, 1pm - 5pm

Contact Jeff Taylor for more info.

Austin Butterfly Forum, Inc.
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Austin, TX 78717



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