

# Heard it through the Pipevine



Jul/Aug/Sept

2008

Newsletter of the Austin Butterfly Forum \* [www.austinbutterflies.org](http://www.austinbutterflies.org)

## Next Club Meeting

### *The Natural History of Enchanted Rock*

by *Lance Allred*

Monday Sep 22

Zilker Botanical Garden, 7 pm

## Speedy Recovery

Randy Mock of Naturally Curious (who sells books and other nature-related resources at some of our meetings), is recovering from a major illness and has been very appreciative of cards and emails, so keep them coming. Better yet, shop at their website.

Randy Mock  
P.O. Box 627  
Cedar Creek, TX 78612

[armock@aol.com](mailto:armock@aol.com)

<http://www.naturallycurious.net/>



White Angled-Sulphur. D. Hardy

## White Angled-Sulphurs

Dan Hardy

The first cold front of the fall has hit Austin as I write and it almost makes me forget the dreadful drought and heat of this past summer. Two hurricanes hit Texas but we got very little rain. And all of this coming after the abundant rains of last summer.

But there was one delight: White Angled-Sulphurs (*Anteos clorinde*). This species, which turns up occasionally in the Rio Grande Valley, has staged a remarkable invasion northward.

It started near the end of July. The sulphurs appeared in almost all of the local gardens. Turk's Cap and Pentas drew them like a magnet. They have been seen as far north as the Texas panhandle and were worth an article in the Dallas paper.

What a delight! A large, sharp butterfly that would land

on red flowers, bending them over from their weight. The swept-back forewing and a short tail make a striking silhouette. Below they look greenish, but what catches your eye are the thick, ropey veins spreading across the wings, like a weight-lifter's arms. When this butterfly rests under a grape leaf it closely matches the leaf's veins.

They look pure white in flight, but small yellow patches on the forewing can be glimpsed.

Why they boiled out of Mexico is anybody's guess. Did the host plants have a *good* year? Did the caterpillar's parasitoids—which are often specific to a host—have a *bad* year? Whatever it was, if these butterflies thought they were finding better conditions in Texas, they were sadly misinformed.

Many species of sulphurs stage periodic movements northward. They may not find host plants, or if they do reproduce the cold kills the pupae. Notice that Large Orange Sulphurs enter our area in large numbers every fall, but they are never seen the following spring.

A few Yellow Angled-Sulphurs are being reported. Barbara Ribble had one in her yard and I've seen one at Zilker. Their size and shape are similar to the White Angle, but the topside is usually yellow and the underside has only one or two prominent veins.

See page 5 for ID tips on the sulphurs that are coming our way this fall.

## Picture Shows and Potlucks

Roxie Roachat

Curious about what Dan Hardy's "Favorite Meeting of the Year" was all about, last winter I vowed not to miss yet another installment of the annual November ABF Member's Show and Tell program. I also decided to participate as he seemed nervous about a potential lack of presenters.

Similar to potlucks that ended up being heavy on desserts or salads, I wasn't really sure what to expect, but it seemed safe to assume that it would involve a lot of professional, gorgeous adult butterfly photos. I tried to focus on other subjects as I went through my photos. Even though I was a bit nervous showing off my ignorance of the subject matter and lack of professional camera expertise, I finally decided that I might as well take advantage of the opportunity to get help with IDs on some interesting shots.

Scott Young kicked off the meeting with an entertaining review of interesting bug shots he'd captured at Zilker in 2007. Some butterflies; many not. Many named; some not. Good, I thought -- it's ok that I don't know all the names.

Valerie Bugh showed pictures and told stories of some longhorn beetles she'd photographed recently. Mmmm... some of those guys are really outrageous; I need to pay more attention to them!

Lauren Lefler described her experience trying to find some of Hawaii's 25 butterflies on her vacation. Wow, just think -- we have more butterflies in our backyards (well, most years, that is) than all of Hawaii!

Mike Quinn showed a fascinating sequence of shots illustrating how Guava skipper caterpillars make their shelters. Dan Hardy followed with an equally intriguing story and pictures showing the lifecycle of a White-striped Longtail from egg to adult. He also shared a picture of two Zebras sitting on a pupa, waiting for the female to emerge.

Guess what? Lots of caterpillar pictures but not many adult butterflies! I had guessed wrong, but oh well, too late to change course, so I showed my pictures of caterpillars and chrysalises that I'd found particularly fascinating over the last year. The audience seemed to enjoy the informal pop quiz and opportunity to share their knowledge about the ones I couldn't identify. I wrapped up the show with people pictures from our field trips. People like seeing pictures of themselves when they're looking good and pictures of others when they're looking goofy (which is how we all look after a long hot long day in the field). This review seemed to be a particularly fun way to wrap up the meeting and the year.

Dan was right -- it really was *quite* an interesting program. The audience was always friendly and appreciative, even when the pictures weren't exactly in focus or the names weren't exactly right. I can't wait for this year's version and hope that this encourages more of you to claim your 10 minutes of glory in sharing your Favorite Fotos of 2008 at our November 24th meeting.

Speaking of potlucks and favorite meetings... our December potluck has always been one of *my* favorite meetings of the year. We always end up with yummy food and excellent conversation. Last year we tried an experiment that worked really well -- running a continuous slide show in the back-ground. So bring your photos on a CD or flash drive to the November meeting. Even if you don't want to do a formal presentation then, we'll use them for the December 4th potluck slideshow. So mark your calendars for the member's Show and Tell on November 24 and start snapping and sort-

## Thanks to Speakers

Thanks to Val Bugh for the August presentation on True Bugs. If you don't know what those are, you missed out on an informative and abundantly-illustrated talk, one which we always get from Val.

Thanks to Marguerite and Vince Hirsch and Mike Quinn for their presentation our July meeting. The following is a summary for those who missed the meeting.

The Hirschs only joined the club in January, but they have made a big contribution. We extend an invitation to all club members to contribute as volunteers, speakers, and board members.

## MONARCH SANCTUARY IN ANANGUEO, MEXICO

Marguerite and Vince Hirsch

Our trip to see the Monarchs in Mexico began on March 7, 2008, with a company called Go With Jo, a travel and tour company with offices in Harlingen and McAllen Texas. Their website is [www.gowithjo.com](http://www.gowithjo.com). You can also contact them by phone 1 800 999 1446. You can look at the different tours they offer on line or request a catalogue.

As the bus leaves by 7:30 in the morning, we arrived the night before and stayed at the Holiday Inn Civic Center in McAllen Texas. The company has several towns along the border where pickups are made, beginning in Brownsville. McAllen is usually the last stop. The hotels will let you leave your car parked on their lot during the trip as long as you are a registered guest.

Crossing the border has never been a problem on the bus. The bus makes a stop just before crossing to allow you to make a money exchange. And as of this writing, only proper id is required, ie., Driver's license and birth certificate. Passports were not required on the bus, but we took ours anyway.

We were finally on our way and enjoyed the scenery as we traveled west on a very nice highway. The tour allows you several stops along the way, for coffee and treats as well as lunch. The bus had a bathroom on board. The bus driver and the tour guide work together to provide a comfortable and safe trip.

Our first night was spent in the town of Matehuala in a lovely Inn. Since we arrived in the early afternoon, we had dinner at around 6 in the evening. The grounds of the Inn were very pretty and there was a walking trail. The next morning after a nice breakfast, we headed for the town of San Miguel de Allende. We had a late lunch and then did some sight seeing and a little shopping. We spent the night in San Miguel.

After breakfast the next morning, we boarded the bus and traveled on through the state of Michoacan to the town of Ananguero at the entrance to the Monarch Sanctuary. We were becoming acquainted with our fellow travelers. Among them were two couples who turned out to be our neighbors and a delightful grandmother traveling with her nine year old granddaughter (see photo). The grandmother's name was Barbara and the little girl was Alexis. Barbara has tagged Monarchs for about forty years. Alexis has tagged for two years. Both have had their tagged butterflies found in the Sanctuary. The tour guide al-



Granddaughter and grandmother have banded Monarchs for years. This was their first trip to the sanctuary. Photo by M. Hirsch

lowed Barbara and Alexis time to give a presentation on the Monarchs, how to tag them, identifying male Monarchs, looking for the eggs on the plants. Barbara and Alexis were from Clinton Iowa and they do this presentation to area schools. Alexis does this presentation in her school to the younger students.

The hotel in Ananguero, Hotel Don Bruno, is a colonial hotel, with three stories and an enclosed patio. Everything was in bloom, bougainvillea, geraniums, pansies, and more. It was beautiful.

The lower rooms did not have central heat, but warmth was provided with wool blankets. The upper stories had fireplaces which were lit while we were at dinner. The dinner was buffet style, which was ideal, as there were forty of us to feed.

We were at 7000 feet and the weather was very crisp and clear. We were prepared with lots of warm clothes. One of our stops prior to our arrival at the hotel had been at a store where we bought cheese and tequila. And since dinner would not be until eight we had an impromptu cheese and tequila tasting in the patio. After dinner, we had some impromptu dancing. Lots of fun!

The next morning we got dressed in warm layers and had our breakfast. Our transportation to the Sanctuary were tarp covered pick-ups and old suburbans. It was a bumpy thirty minute ride up the side of the mountain to an elevation of 9000 feet. The sun was just coming up over the mountains in the Oyamel Fir forest where the butterflies roost. It was difficult to see the butterflies at first, because I thought they would be orange. But in the cool early morning, the butterflies are all still clustered on top of one another in very large groups of maybe two or three hundred and suspended from branches. They were dark in color because the sun had not yet reached them to warm them and they were not moving. Gradually as the sun rose higher in the sky, and the first rays began to warm these lovely creatures, they slowly began to flutter down. Sometimes there would be butterflies "showers" when maybe a hundred or more butterflies would leave the cluster together and fly to the nearest branch or shrub. That was a





Photo of **Hermit Skipper** by Jerry Mayfield, club member. Jerry took this photo in his yard in August. This and another sighting the day before at Lady Bird Wildflower Center are first for Travis County.

thrilling sight. Some would flutter down to the ground where they died. But others would make it.

There are millions of Monarchs in the Sanctuary. Wintering Monarchs require proper constant temperature. They must not get so cold that they freeze, or cannot fly to food and water, but they also can't be so warm that they dry up or use up all their energy reserves. The fir forest canopy blankets them by night and shades them by day. Even slight thinning allows birds and other predators to attack them and lessens their protection from the wind and cold.

Barbara had talked about identifying male Monarchs and here in the Sanctuary, she showed us one. Male Monarchs have a dot on their hind wings. The females have thicker veins on theirs.

Millions of Monarchs gather in a geographically

small area, which makes them vulnerable to environmental changes. The Oyamel Fir forest is only found at about 9000 feet and stretches over about forty to fifty thousand mountaintop acres. Although there have been presidential decrees to protect the forest, the forest is slowly being destroyed. People live in the preserve and they depend on the forest as well for subsistence through farming, grazing, and woodcutting. We did see damaged trees in the forest, and our guides told us that people were not allowed to cut the trees unless they were damaged.

The walk through the part of the Sanctuary where we went took about two hours. There are no marked trails and sometimes the walking was a little rugged. We made it down to the meadow and looking up in the sky we could see thousands and thousands of butterflies. When you take a picture of them you can only see a few and the rest are tiny specks. Butterfly watchers count the butterflies by putting a grid on the picture and counting the number of specks in a grid and multiply that number by the number of grids. There can be as many as ten thousand!

Our trip to sanctuary was over. We had lunch and continued our journey visiting the town of Patzcuaro and the island of Janitzio. At breakfast the following morning, we encountered a teacher group who was visiting the Monarch Sanctu-

ary. They were with a group called the Monarch Teacher Network. This teacher network originated in Canada, where the Monarchs begin their migration.

Type in Monarch Teacher Network in your search engine and their home page will come up. On the left side of the screen are several options and if you click on Monarch Butterflies Mexico trip you will see a delightful You Tube video of the teachers' trip to Mexico last spring. It is a sight you don't want to miss. We certainly enjoyed our trip to Mexico and the Monarch Sanctuary. It would be wonderful if we could do it again!

## ID Tips for Large Sulphurs

Dan Hardy

Large sulphurs are conspicuous butterflies but tricky to identify. They land with their wings closed, so the upper sides have to be glimpsed in flight. You can't identify all individuals. Study the Cloudless. It is most common and all the others can be compared against it.

**Cloudless Sulphur** - *Phoebis sennae*. The common big sulphur in Austin year-round.

Male: *lemon yellow* above; *no orange*.

Female: Pale yellow to yellow-white, with one or two large spots in center of the underside of both wings. Usually has smaller spots sprinkled around, including the basal part of the wing (closest to the body).

Unlike next species, *no straight lines*

**Large Orange Sulphur**—*Phoebis agarithe* Enter Austin in large numbers in the Fall. Males and females have different colors.

Males *orange* or deep yellow; size of Cloudless Sulphur. Faint or absent line (see below).

Female *white* in flight; underside pale with *straight line on forewing* (see photo).



Large Orange Sulphur female with characteristic straight line. Photo by Dan Hardy

**Orange-barred Sulphur**- Phoebis philea A few in late summer and fall.

*Larger than two previous species. Powerful flight at tree top level, then zooming down to ground level.*

Male: yellow-orange in flight. *Orange patches* on upper side are hard to glimpse in flight. At rest the patches may be seen when the butterfly is illuminated from behind.

Female: No straight lines; *large size and flight style*; pale yellow below, often with *blush of orange*.

**Statira Sulphur**—Aphrissa statira Rare; *take a picture*. Most diagnostic features are topside, which is rarely seen. ID is a *process of elimination*. Probably overlooked.

Slightly smaller than Cloudless; Male pale green to yellow with almost no markings below. The female has weak markings but lacks any at the base of the wing.

**White Angled-Sulphur** - Anteos clorinde

Large size and distinct shape (see page 1)

**Yellow angled-Sulphur** - Anteo maerula

Like previous species but with *yellow* on upper side and fewer thick veins below

**Lyside Sulphur**—Kricogonia lyside

*Smaller than all the others.* Underside has relatively *pointed forewing*, almost like a Dogface (see photo). Hind wing with a *swollen vein* in center of discal cell (the oval space near the base of the wing bounded by veins).

Above: Can appear almost totally *white*, or whitish to yellow white.



Lyside Sulphur—note wing shape and one swollen vein.

## Fall Festivals in Valley and Mexico

Dan Hardy

The 13th Annual Texas Butterfly Festival will be held on October 16-19, 2008, in Mission, TX. Club president, Mike Quinn, has been active in the festival since its inception. He will be one of the trip leaders and will give a presentation. A highly recommended trip. For more information go to the web site: <http://www.texasbutterfly.com/>

After the festival join me for the El Cielo Butterfly Festival from October 19—23, 2008. The two festival are back to back but are not affiliated with each other. Last year there were 7 of us from Austin. Derek Muschalek and I will be the butterfly leaders.

Mexbirds and Sonia Ortiz has offered this trip for many years now and they have the arrangements down pat. This is a hassle-free way to see Mexico and its extraordinary butterflies.

I hope some of us can carpool to the valley.

<http://www.mexbirds.net/id11.html>

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## Fourth of July Count

Dan Hardy

I put off writing this summary as long as I could. The drought and heat were oppressive. We found only 29 species. This contrasted with our best-ever 63 species in 2007, but that was a summer of constant rain and lush vegetation. This year's total individuals were only a tenth of last year.

Sixteen people turned out for the count. After reconnoitering Zilker garden, we went to St. Edward's Park. We split in to two parties. Our group's best find was a dragonfly called the Dragonhunter, which is a huge clubtail that prey on other dragonflies. The other party found a Red-spotted Purple butterfly.

After lunch at a Vietnamese restaurant (the high point?), a few of us continued on to Barton Greenbelt. But we quickly called it a day after walking the creek bed with the blinding white stones and oven-like heat.

As with much of the butterflying this summer, it's best to forget and move on.

## Fall Hot Spots

Dan Hardy

Okay, you can't go to the Valley or Mexico this year. But you can get a lot of tropical rarities at these local gardens.

- 1) **Dromgoole's Natural Gardener** in Oak Hill has a dedicated Butterfly Garden with a huge stand of Eupatorium odoratum. When it blooms in October and November it is worth visiting (see photo). This plant is announced over the nursery's intercom because the numbers of butterflies can be astounding. Search for rare Soldiers amongst the Queens.
- 2) **Lady Bird Wildflower Center**—in times of drought this garden always has flowers and will be good well into November for Southern rarities. Last year Blue-eyed Sailors were found.
- 3) **Zilker Butterfly Garden**—another oasis as the fall lengthens. Can be good on warm days well into December. Check out all those sulphurs with the ID tips from this issue.
- 4) **Mount Bonnell**—This place attracts hill-topping species, so it can concentrate rare butterflies. I've seen Ruby-spotted Swallowtail, White-patched Skipper and Zilpa Longtails at the top. There's always Black Swallowtails. Check the blooming Goldeneye in October for the Lacey's Scrub-Hairstreak. Glassberg's *Butterflies through Binoculars* says of Lacey's: "Of the species of butterflies resident in the West, this is one of the most difficult to find." This park is the best place in Texas to find this scarce hairstreak.

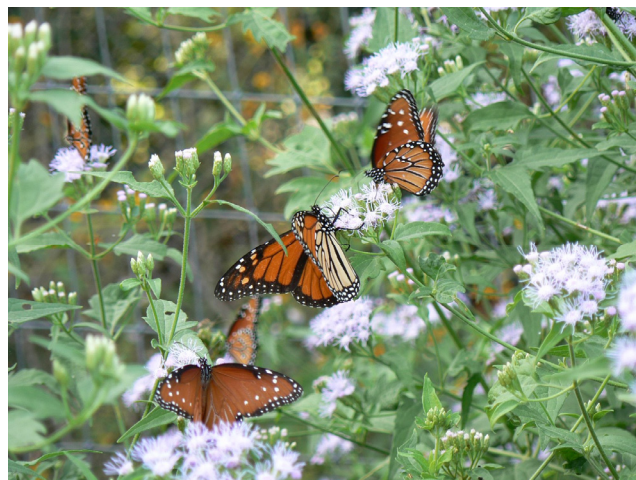
## New Members

John Oliver, Marilyn Kircus, Winnie & Maynard Spitz, Peg Wallace, Ken and Barbara Zaslow, Timothy and Charlotte Davis, and Michael Portman

## Food and Drinks

Thanks to the following members for bring food and drinks June through July:

Robert Corbin, Jerly Leifeste, Debbie Russell, Lois Schubert, Liz Cannedy, and Mary Holland.



Queens and Monarch nectaring on Eupatorium at Dromgoole's, November 2007. Photo by R. Rochat

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## Treasurer's Report for 2007

Doris Hill

### Income

Dues	\$ 1,460
Sponsors (nurseries)	165
Book Sales	30
Work Shop	560
Misc	<u>176</u>
Total	\$ 2,391

**Average Bank Balance**     \$ 2,673

### Expenses

Newsletter	\$ 399
Bazaar Donation	75
Garden Festival	293
AAGC Dues	195
Speakers	125
NABA count	78
Misc	<u>81</u>
Total	\$ 1,246



# Calendar

**Nature Quest - 2008**, September 19 - 21, 2008, Uvalde, Texas; 1-800-210-0380 or <http://www.thcrr.com/>.

**Mon Sep 22 - Club Meeting: *Enchanted Rock State Natural Area*.** [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#), 7:00pm. **Lance Allred**, Austin-based photographer, will discuss his book project on one of Texas' favorite parks, Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. The project covers the history, geology, weather, flora, and fauna, with the goal of producing a comprehensive multi-disciplinary guide to the park. Join him as he discusses some of the ongoing research on its origins, and shows some of his image portfolio, including 55 butterfly species, 90 moths, flowers, damselfly, with the goal of producing a comprehensive multi-disciplinary guide to the park. and dragonfly, spider, insects, mammals, and birds. See the [Enchanted Rock web site](#) for more information.

**Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO** - Oct 4-5, TPWD Headquarters, Austin. <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expo>  
Please contact Mike Quinn if you would like to volunteer at his insect table: [entomike@gmail.com](mailto:entomike@gmail.com) or 512-389-8759.

**Monarch Tagging** - Saturday, October 11, at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, Doeskin Ranch (on 1174), during the National Wildlife Refuge Week celebration Balcones Canyonlands NWR - Austin

**Fall Plant Sale and Gardening Festival** - October 18 - 19, 2008, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center  
Annually Since 1989, [www.wildflower.org/plantsale/](http://www.wildflower.org/plantsale/).

**Thursday to Sunday, October 16-19 - 13th Annual Texas Butterfly Festival** in Mission, TX,  
[www.texasbutterfly.com](http://www.texasbutterfly.com). See page 5.

**Sunday to Thursday, October 19-23. El Cielo Butterfly Festival.** What better way to follow up the Mission festival with a guided bus tour deep into northeast Mexico. Nearly 300 species were seen on last year's trip. See page 5.

**Mon Oct 27 - Club Meeting: *Arachnids of Texas and the World*.** Presentation by **Dave Moellendorf** ([Austin Arachnological Services](#)). Spider expert Dave Moellendorf will bring a zoo of charismatic arachnids from around the world, including a "bird-eating" spider from South America. He'll tell us about the natural history, behavior, and habitats of his animals. Dave is an expert on the tarantulas of Texas and will spend some time showing us our native tarantulas, telling us about them and his efforts to conserve them. [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#), 7:00pm.

**Mon Nov 24 - Club Meeting: *Member Show and Tell*.** Members can show slides of butterflies, ranging from those in the backyard to distant travels, or you can talk about your best butterfly experience of the year. We will have an LCD projector available so you only have to bring a CD or thumb drive. We also have a slide projector. You have 10 minutes. It's a fun way to wrap up the year, as the butterflies dwindle. If you want to participate, please contact Dan Hardy [dhh787@yahoo.com](mailto:dhh787@yahoo.com). As usual the meeting is at [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#), 7:00pm. See article on page 2.

**Thu Dec 4 - Christmas Pot Luck Dinner.** Austin Butterfly Forum will provide the ham. We ask members to bring a dish. The dinner will be held at our usual meeting place, the [Zilker Botanical Garden Center](#), starting at 6:30pm. If you have any questions, please contact our Refreshments Coordinator pegwal-lace@gmail.com **Note:** the potluck is earlier in the month than our usual meeting and on a different day of the week.

**Austin Butterfly Forum, Inc.**

**866 Castle Ridge Road**

**Austin, Texas 78746**



## **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