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SHORTER CONTRIBUTIONS

LOCAL COMPILATION OF AN ANNOTATED BUTTERFLY CHECKLIST

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Since 2015, volunteers from two non-profit organizations, the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists, have been developing an annotated checklist of butterflies (Superfamily Papilionoidea) and skippers (Superfamily Hesperioidea). The goal of the project is to document details of species in the greater Williamsburg area of Virginia, which encompasses the City of Williamsburg and two adjacent counties (James City and York). This year's fifth edition documents 94 species, providing information gleaned from the literature on flight periods, host plants, habitats, broods, and behaviors, and observations made by volunteers. The idea for the project was based on a similar annotated checklist for birds that was compiled for the same general area.

The area has an impressive diversity of butterflies, and there is an increasing number of people who are interested in documenting them. The core group of butterfly enthusiasts promotes activities that involve novice master naturalists and others in the community. For example, in 2014, members established the Williamsburg Annual Butterfly Count, sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) and entered it as a master naturalist citizen science project. Additional spring and fall surveys take place in multiple Williamsburg locations, including Bioblitzes sponsored by the Colonial National Historical Park. Members also promote participation in annual NABA counts in other locations in Virginia. Several members of the group regularly participate in weekly year-round “Wildlife Mapping” activities that provide data on all fauna. In addition, members submit photos of sightings to Butterflies and Moths of North America (BAMONA), eButterfly, and iNaturalist. Photographs of each species document sightings, but not all of these species are posted by the online databases.

The **Butterflies of the Greater Williamsburg Area: An Annotated List of Species** establishes a baseline of information about local butterflies and skippers. At present, 85 species are described as common, uncommon, or rare; three species are described as stray or aberrant (observed only once and not expected to originate in this region); and six species have no recent sightings but were found historically.

The annotated list is used as a workbook to record data and each succeeding draft provides an improved understanding of local butterfly species and their habitat needs. Early and late dates and peak counts are updated each year. Subsequent versions of the checklist will continue to refine data and improve the understanding of butterflies and skippers at the local level. It was intended that eventually the document will be used by a wider audience, for example to help landowners or park employees with guidance about planting and sustaining butterfly habitats.

Below are two examples of species descriptions contained in the annotated listing. The descriptions are written as a work in progress. If the document is to be distributed, then dates, locations, and observers will be removed.

The two examples below are both rare species. For this document, the definition of **rare** is very limited sightings, in limited locations, usually with low individual numbers; as compared to **common** that is defined as observed predictably in suitable habitat or **uncommon** as limited sightings, found in several locations, not found consistently from year to year.

Harvester (*Feniseca tarquinius*) **Rare** **Broods:** Possibly 6 or more

Expected Flight Period: Late Mar. – Sep. (Mar. - Apr. – Sep.)

Reported Sightings:

Sight dates by quarter month ●

Intermittent

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
			●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●			

Earliest: Apr. 8, 2012 (B. Taber, home)

Latest: Sep. 26, 2018 (B. Taber, home)

Peak Count: Apr. 21, 2016 (B. Taber, home) # 2; Jun. 22, 2003 (T. Kain, home) # 2

Other Sightings: Apr. 20, 21, 30, 2013, 2015, Apr. 21-24, 2016, Apr. 22-27, 2019, May 5, 7-10, 12, 2019, May 11, 2013 (B. Taber, BAMONA), May 24, 2010, Jun. 5, 9, 10, 2019 (B. Taber, home); Apr. 18, 2018 (A. Belden, G. Driscole, Debord); Apr. 18-19, 2018 (G. Driscole, A. Frank, Warhill); May 24, 2010, Jun. 6, 30, 1996, Jun. 22, 2003, Jul. 8-10, 1996, Jul. 21, 2014 (T. Kain, home); Jun. 11, 2019 (N. Barnhart, A. Frank, NOL, photo); Jun. 11, Jul. 21, 2019 (N. Barnhart, K. Lorenzen, B. Taber, NOL, photo); Sep. 19, 2017 (A. Frank, Debord Tract)

Habitat: Bottom or upland deciduous or mixed forests; usually near streams, ponds, or swamps with alder thickets.

Caterpillar Hosts: Woolly aphids that, in turn, feed on Smooth Alder (*Alnus serrulata*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*), and possibly other woody species. This is our only insectivorous caterpillar.

Notes: Adults never nectar, acquiring nutrients from moist soil along dirt roads and trails or along muddy stream banks near Smooth Alder (*Alnus serrulata*); also acquires nutrients from aphid honeydew, sap, dung, and carrion. Coloration can be bright reddish-orange or muted tan/brown. Can easily be mistaken for a moth when in flight.

Creole Pearly-eye (*Enodia creola*) **Rare** **Broods: 2**

Expected Flight Period: May – Sep. (May/Jun. – Jul./Aug. – Oct.)

Reported Sightings:

Sight dates by quarter month ●

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●			

Earliest: May 16, 2019 K. Lorenzen +, NOL, photos)

Latest: Sep. 29, 2018 (K. Lorenzen +, NOL)

Peak Count: Jul. 26, 2019 (K. Lorenzen +, NOL, photos) #21

Other Sightings: May 18, 21, 24, 28, 31, Jun. 4, 7, 9, 17, 21, Jul. 4, 7, 10, 17, 21, 26, 28, Aug. 6, 11, 16, 20, 22, 27, 29, Sep. 12, 2019 (K. Lorenzen +, NOL, photos); Aug. 9, 2017 (G. Driscole, A. Frank, K. Lorenzen, B. Taber, NOL); Aug. 15, 2016 (K. Lorenzen, NOL, photo); Aug. 15, 2017 (K. Lorenzen +, NOL, photo); Aug. 16, 20, 23, 25, 2018 (NOL, photos); Sep. 4, 6, 11, 16, 19, 25, 29, 2018 (NOL, photos)

Habitat: Usually on the periphery of dense, moist or wet bottomland woods and hardwood swamps with cane.

Caterpillar Hosts: Switch Cane (*Arundinaria tecta*).

Notes: Does not nectar on flowers; adults obtain nutrients from moist soil, dung, carrion and other putrefying matter. Males perch to await females. Aug. 15, 2016 was the first known sighting for this area.