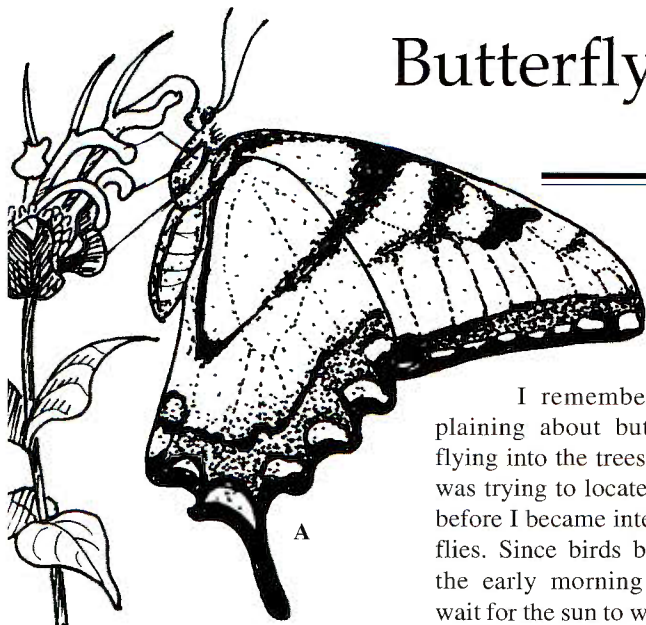


Butterflying for Birders

by Kathy Phelps



An Eastern Wood-Pewee whistles "pee-err," pee-a-wee" and "fee-ba-dee" in random order. A Carolina Wren shouts its "tea-kettle" calls from the ravine, and an Indigo Bunting sings its series of paired notes. All as color creeps into the eastern sky, and as I fight to wake up from a cool night that invites sleep.

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo adds a series of "klowps," and a Field Sparrow rolls his songs to a stop.

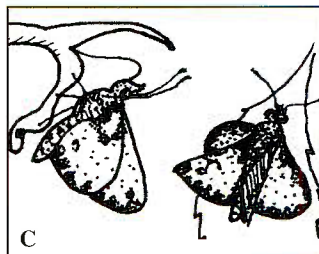
By 7 a.m. the bird chorus dwindles, and the grasshopper/cicada chorus builds. Even the abrupt calls of a White-eyed Vireo don't revive it. After all, what's to sing about on the first day of August? The little amount of activity doesn't do much to excite this birder. It's no excuse to stay home, though, not when the butterflies will begin basking, flying, and feeding as soon as direct sunlight reaches camp.

I remember complaining about butterflies flying into the trees when I was trying to locate birds. That was before I became interested in butterflies. Since birds become active in the early morning and butterflies wait for the sun to warm them before they fly, it simplifies things for this birder-butterflyer.

I camp at rural property we own seven miles southeast of Harrisburg. I mow the area around the camper and let the rest of the 33 acres grow naturally. The mixture of woods, two ravines, and barrens (a prairie-like plant community with scattered trees) offers a variety of habitat.

Sunlight slips over the driveway and the wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) bordering it. The first Spicebush Swallowtail

butterfly sails in and lands on the pink flowers, its forewings continually beating as it sips nectar. Soon two more join it. They fly about, feed, and occasionally bask with their black wings open flat. All the activity gives a good view of the row of light spots edging the wings and the wash of blue on



the hindwings. Two rows of orange spots edge a blue area underneath on their hind-wings. A

Tiger Swallowtail joins them. Its bold yellow and black pattern makes it easy to identify. Swallowtails are large butterflies with wingspans ranging between 2.5 and 5.5 inches, and with tail-like projections on their hindwings. Six species occur in Illinois.

As the sunlight covers more vegetation, the butterflies' area of activity broadens. Butterflies are cold blooded and need the sunlight to warm their blood and flight muscles.

Next comes a Great Spangled Fritillary. Its large size, orange and brown wings with a black pattern, and silver spots underneath on the hindwings make it another butterfly easy to identify. It and the Variegated Fritillary are the only fritillaries in southern Illinois; three other species occur in northern Illinois.

Fritillaries are one of the many members of the large diverse Family Nymphalidae, or brush-foots. The front pair of legs on brush-foots are greatly reduced, giving them the impression of having only four legs.

A male Zabulon Skipper zips in, lands on the mint, spreads its hind-wings out flat, and angles its fore-

