

Beyond the Butterfly Garden

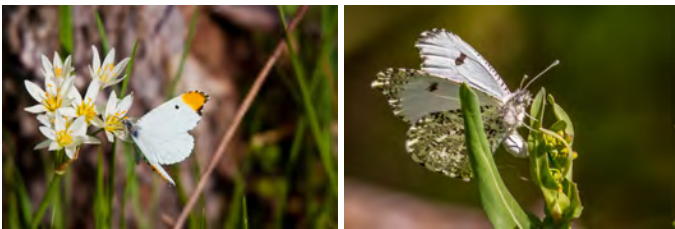
Volume 1, Issue 2

March, 2017

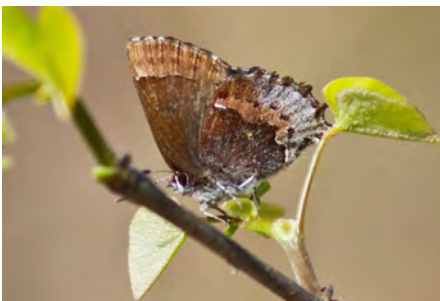
Butterflies can be found at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge during any month or season, and throughout the year, visitors are encouraged to look beyond the Butterfly Garden to find them. The coming of spring causes the woods and roadsides to burst forth with color from Redbud, Wild Plum, and other flowering trees. Butterflies and moths are drawn to these blooms.

All butterfly species have a similar life cycle. Adult butterflies lay eggs on or near their favored host plant. The eggs hatch into caterpillars that feed until they are ready to pupate. They metamorphose in their chrysalis and emerge as adult butterflies. For some species, this entire life cycle can complete in a few weeks but for others it takes an entire year. Some spring butterflies are only found this time of the year.

As soon as the spring flowers like False Garlic and those in the mustard family emerge, **Falcate Orangetip** butterflies emerge from



their chrysalises where they have been for nearly a year. These white butterflies show gender differences in their color and patterning. Only the male (above, left) of this species shows the bright orange tip on its forewing. After mating, the female (above, right) lays her eggs singly on the emerging blooms of a mustard plant. The eggs hatch as the plant blooms providing food for the caterpillar until it wraps up in its chrysalis to wait for the next spring. Look for these on Haller Haven Trail or along Oil Field Rd.



Another butterfly that is only seen in spring is the **Henry's Elfin**. This butterfly's eggs are frequently laid on the flowers and buds of the Redbud tree. The emerging caterpillar feeds on the buds and young leaves and then pupates in the

litter at the base of the host tree. Adult butterflies emerge at the end of the following winter. Henry's Elfins will also lay eggs on American or Yaupon Holly or on Blueberry bushes in the north.

Several small dark skippers called Duskywings are found around Redbud and other spring blooms along Bennett Rd and Sandy Point Rd. Horace's and Juvenal's Duskywings can be very difficult to differentiate but the **Funereal Duskywing** always has bright white fringe edging its hind wings.



Two species of Swallowtails are among the earliest butterflies found on the refuge because they overwinter as chrysalids. They are the largest and busiest butterflies seen here. In early spring you can find **Eastern Tiger Swallowtails** (below, left) everywhere from Haller



Haven and Meadow Pond trails to Bennett and Oilfield Roads. **Black Swallowtails** (above, right) will often be found nectaring on flowers on the auto tour and in the fields along Wildlife Road but you may also find them alongside other roadways looking for blooms.

Orange Sulphur butterflies (below) in early spring may display a dusting of green scales underneath.

