

Beyond the Butterfly Garden

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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. As April slides into May, leaves on trees have formed a shady canopy. Native Texas spring flowers like Texas Dandelion and Texas Vervain are blooming and attracting many different butterfly species.

The west side of the refuge (Sandy Point Unit) features many roads through riparian forest and open fields as well as many points of lake access. Throughout that area, there is a wide variety of butterflies to enjoy. Look along the forest edges and in the low growing flowers on the pad roads for dark butterflies in the Skipper family.



Largest and most common of these is the **Funereal Duskywing** (above left), easily identified by the white fringe trailing its hindwing. The **Northern Cloudywing** (above right) is very similar in size but less distinctly marked above and has shorter brown fringe on its hindwing. Each measures about an inch and a half with wings open.

Two smaller butterflies have recently been added to the list of species found on the refuge. These two have probably always been there but because they are so tiny (less than 3/4 inch) they may have been overlooked. **Bell's Roadside-skippers** (left) fly low and fast and generally stay close to the ground. They perch with their wings closed. The fringe edging both the forewing and the hindwing is checkered. Unless faded, the row of spots near the edge of the hindwing appears connected.



Hayhurst's Scallopwing (below) visits flowers with its wings open but unless it catches the sun, it appears solid black. In the right light, especially the female shows bands of darker and lighter brown. As its name implies, the edges of its hindwing are uneven, giving a scalloped appearance. Both of these butterflies stay close to the edges of the forest, especially in moist areas, but they do venture out to nectar on the flowers growing along the pad roads.



One larger and more distinctly patterned butterfly that is found almost exclusively in the woods is the Hackberry Emperor. You may



find it open or closed and each side is distinctive. It generally feeds with its wings closed, showing off its white underside with its many spots and lines. If disturbed, it will frequently perch on the bark of a tree, where it may open its wings to bask in the sun. Also frequently found in the woods is the **Red Admiral** (right) with its bold orange stripes on a dark brown background, although they may also be seen in fields or gardens. They sometimes appear fearless, as they will often let humans get quite close before flying.



A popular visitor to home gardens, the **Gulf Fritillary** (left) is equally happy on the back roads and fields of the refuge. These are warm weather butterflies and are rarely seen north of Oklahoma. They nectar on many flowers and visit all types of thistle, but will lay their eggs on various species of Passion Vine.



A related butterfly frequenting open fields of wildflowers on the refuge now through fall is the **Variegated Fritillary** (right). More subdued in coloring, these are common throughout much of the eastern United States. It, too, will lay its eggs on Passion Vine, but also on flax, violets, and other plants.

