

Beyond the Butterfly Garden

Volume 1, Issue 6

July, 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. Summer continues, but the heat cannot diminish the beauty of the Buttonbush and Thistle, now joined by Sunflowers and Sawleaf Daisies. Tiny Frog Fruit continues to attract butterflies.

The family of butterflies known as Whites and Sulphurs has several members that can be found at Hagerman NWR throughout most of the year. Look for them in open fields, along roadsides, and at the edges of forests. The largest Sulphur in the group is the **Cloudless Sulphur**, often seen on flowers or at mud. With a wingspan of three inches and a sunny yellow upper wing surface, these are hard to miss. The underside



is sometimes marked with brownish spots, but always has 1-2 bold white spots on both the forewing and the hindwing.

Somewhat smaller, with a wingspan averaging a bit over two inches is the **Orange Sulphur**. This is arguably the most common butterfly seen at the refuge due to its many nectar sources and frequent overlapping brood hatches. The upper surface of the Orange Sulphur's wings is bordered in black—a feature seen in several other Sulphurs.



The warm orange hue on the forewing is especially prominent in fall, and can be seen most easily when the butterfly is backlit.

The **Sleepy Orange** butterfly is similar in size to the Orange Sulphur but can easily be distinguished by the bold brick red or rusty brown patterning on the hindwing. Both will perch with wings closed but in flight, the Sleepy Orange is much brighter.



An occasional late summer visitor to Grayson County is the **Southern Dogface**, so named because the black border and dark spot on the forewing appear to mimic a canine's eye and snout. The sharply angled forewing helps to identify this similar Sulphur.



The **Little Yellow** butterfly is bright yellow, usually with only a few small dark spots sprinkled over the under side of its wings. Above, the wings are sparsely bordered in black, especially at the tip of the forewing. These are tiny, with a wingspan of just over an inch, and fly close to the ground in

open areas. Like other Sulphurs, they will also draw water and minerals from muddy areas along roadsides.

Dainty Sulphur is similar in size to the Little Yellow but instead of bright yellow, this butterfly is a soft pastel when viewed in flight. Above, it is black bordered and underneath, the forewing is orange toward the base with two bold black spots near the edge. You will find these on small flowers growing close to the ground, such as Frog Fruit or Fleabane.



There are many very similar looking butterflies in this family. The most common white on the refuge is the **Checkered White**. Its wingspan is about two inches and though its markings can be quite variable, it typically shows a checkered pattern both above and below. The hindwing may have brown veining, especially in spring. The similarly sized **Cabbage White** butterfly (below) has recently been identified on the



refuge, but currently is rarely seen. It nectars on the same flowers and can easily be mistaken for a lightly patterned Checkered White. Look for one or two white spots on the forewing of the Cabbage White, instead of the checkered pattern. The hindwing of the Cabbage White is usually unmarked below.

