

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. The profusion of color that summer and fall flowers bring is over. Now is the time for butterflies to feed on small flowers or late blooms. Migrants are often seen looking for places to spend the night.

Without a doubt the **Monarch** is the star of the season! We are fortunate to have these beauties year round but in October, Monarchs from everywhere east of the Rockies are passing through



Texas on the way to their wintering grounds in Mexico. You will find them all over the refuge, either looking for food or landing on leaves as they search for a secure place to rest for the night.

The most similar mimic of the Monarch is the **Viceroy**. The Viceroy is easily identified by the black line through their hindwing. Viceroy's do not migrate like Monarchs. Instead, mature caterpillars create a shelter from a rolled Cottonwood or Willow leaf in which to spend the winter.



The **Queen** is smaller and typically a rich brown color, but also mimics the Monarch. Their behavior is similar as well. Queens sometimes gather to roost communally at night and in Texas, they appear to migrate. The Queen's caterpillar host is Milkweed, like the Monarch's, which makes them distasteful to predators. All three of these are seen together in the Butterfly Garden.



The **Red-spotted Purple** is a strikingly patterned butterfly with an iridescent blue hindwing above. They are not often found nectaring on blooms, instead feeding on tree sap, rotting fruit, or animal dung. Their larvae feed on Oaks and Cottonwoods, and caterpillars over-winter.

The **Tawny Emperor** is related to but less common than the Hackberry Emperor. They lay their eggs on Hackberry trees and rarely visit flowers, so look for them in the woods on Oil Field Rd. Tawny Emperor caterpillars over-winter in groups of ten (10) or so in a curled dead leaf.



Fall is a good time to find southern strays like the **Brazilian Skipper**. These are very large compared to other skippers and fly spring to fall in south Texas. Look for them in the Butterfly Garden and then see if you can find them elsewhere on the refuge. Present only in small

numbers, it's unlikely they breed in Grayson County. Other strays you might find in the garden include the **Mallow Scrub-hairstreak** (right) which could be easily overlooked as being "just another Gray Hairstreak." These are usually found in the Rio Grande Valley and do not cross the Red River



but we've found them annually at Hagerman. A rare stray seen here is the **Tailed Orange** (left). Typically a butterfly of Mexico, in years with heavy rains, these migrate north into Texas. They are very similar to the Sleepy Orange but their hindwing narrows to a distinctive point.