

Potpourri

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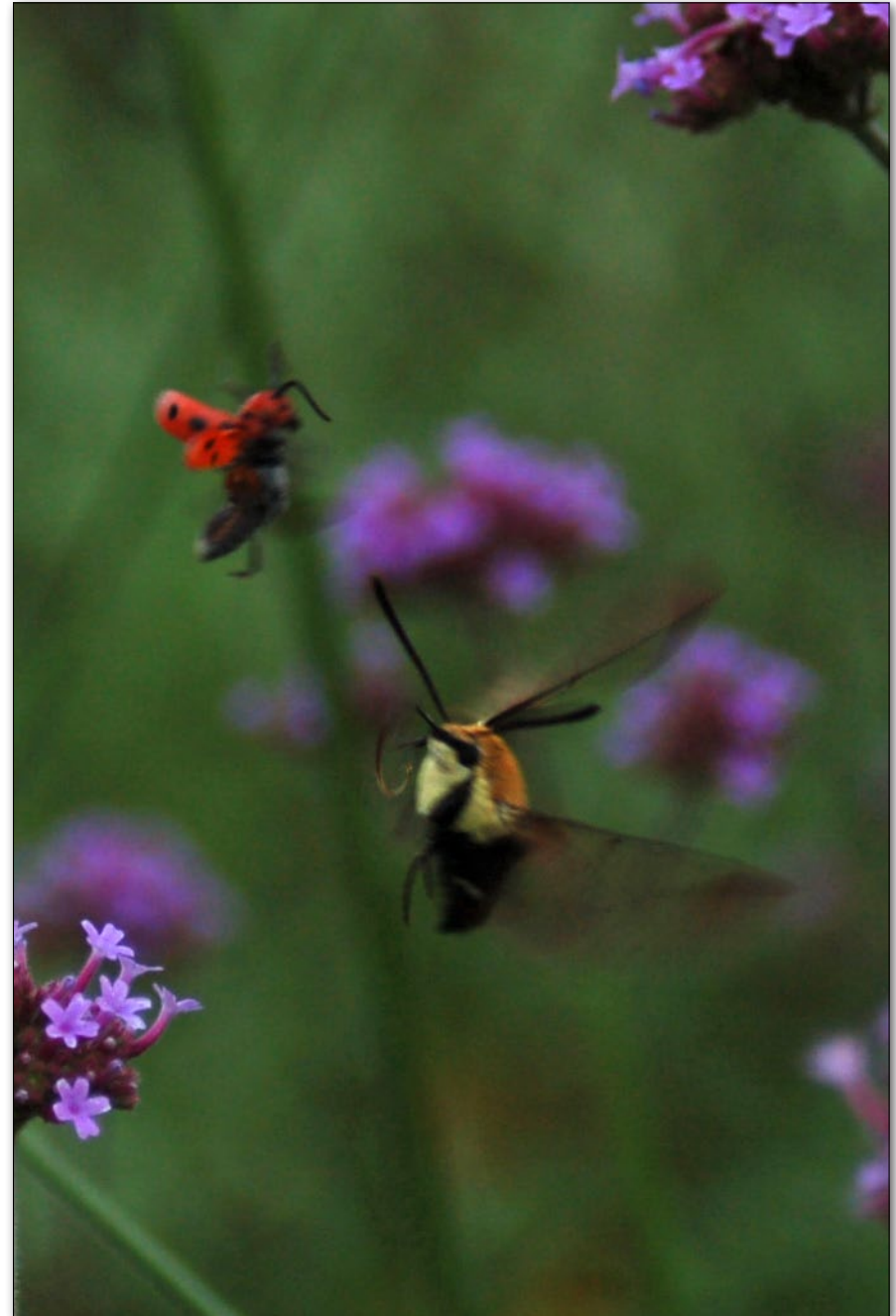
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The amount of different 6 plus legged species in our back yard is truly amazing. So many of them I've never noticed before. Organizing so much material is difficult, so a series of potpourri projects are planned which can be reorganized later. This will make the information more useful to others while preventing individual project sizes from getting too large.

I've refined my photography techniques this season so that most often I manually set the focus as close as possible, the zoom at full, and the shutter speed at 1/160th second. I move closer until the subject is in focus, which is about 8" away. This gives me a 3" wide view which works for all but the largest insects.

Many of the insects are startled by quick movements and certain sounds, so moving slowly helps. Some like Tortoise Beetles are so shy as to make photography nearly impossible. Some insects will challenge you if they realize your attention is directed at them. Particularly one morning, there was a Great Golden Digger Wasp right in my face checking me out for a few seconds. It was hard to imagine what it was thinking, but it sure made me uncomfortable.

Insects also interact with each other. Often this is quick and only captured by accident. Here a Eastern Milkweed Longhorn and a Hummingbird Moth narrowly avoid a midair collision on a cloudy day. Whoops! Talk about being caught with your tongue hanging out.



Bluebird schedule 2011

A European Paper Wasp was trying to build nest before bluebird nesting began and eventually had to be killed after removing the wasp nest multiple times failed to get the message across.

5/20 Bluebirds nest begun

5/22 nest in process

5/26 laying

6/11 hatching has begun

6/17 nestlings audible

6/21 adults feeding nestlings without entering

6/27 to 6/29 nestlings at opening

6/30 nestlings fledge

Parents led fledglings off almost immediately, though they were usually back briefly in the mornings after that.

Top: Male Bluebird checks on nestlings.

Bottom: Last nestling an instant before becoming airborne for the first time.



Butterfly group



Although we see Red-spotted Purples, *Basilarchia astyanax*, every year, they aren't at all common. They always seem to end up on our butterfly bushes.

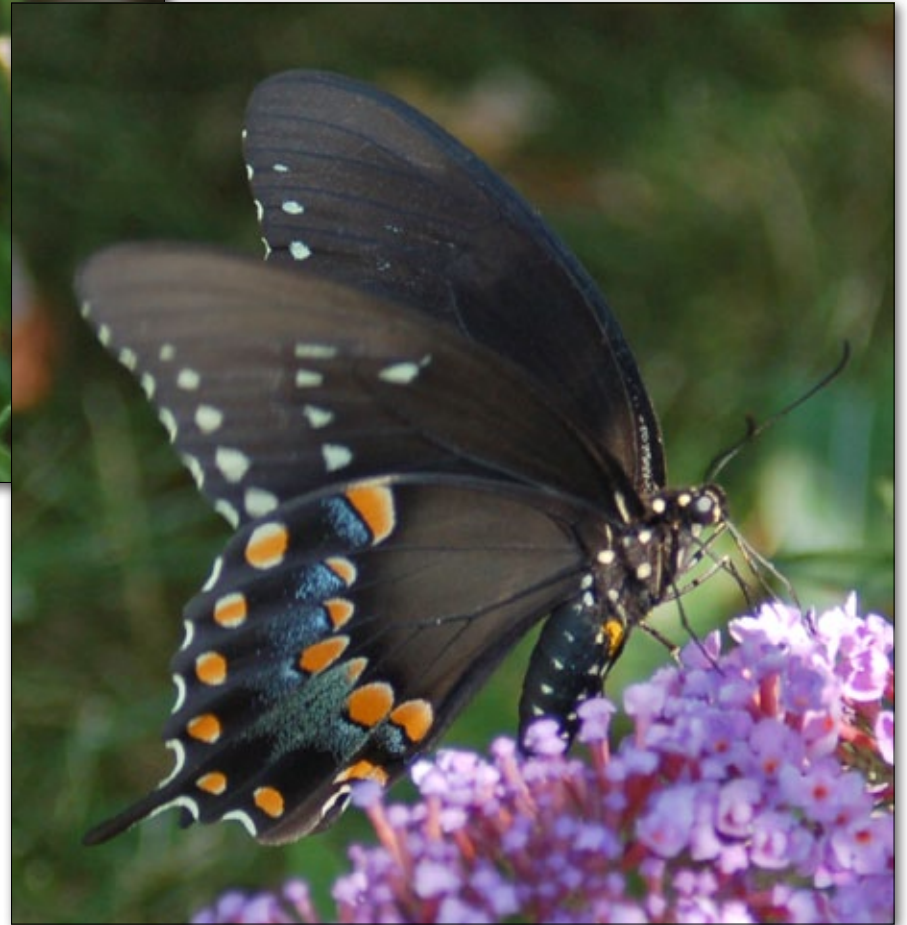


More Red-spotted Purple photos.





This is a Spicebush Swallowtail, *Pterourus troilus*.



This is an Eastern Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes*. A chunk is missing out of the hind wing. These are usually quite common, but not yet this year.



Young swallowtail larva on dill in mid July

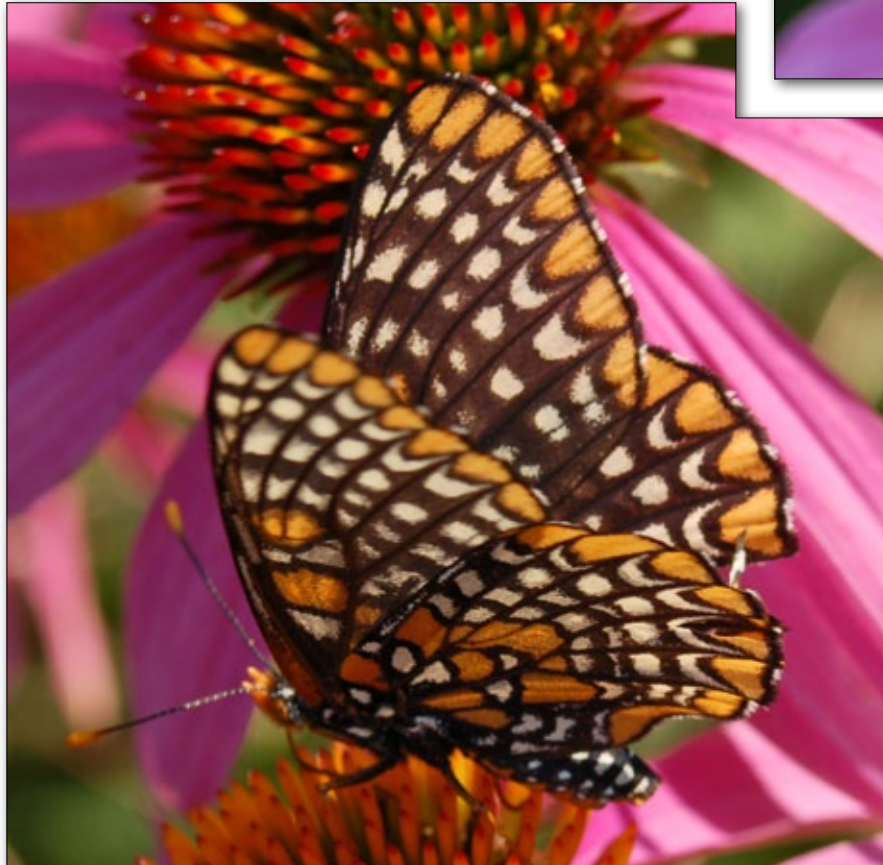
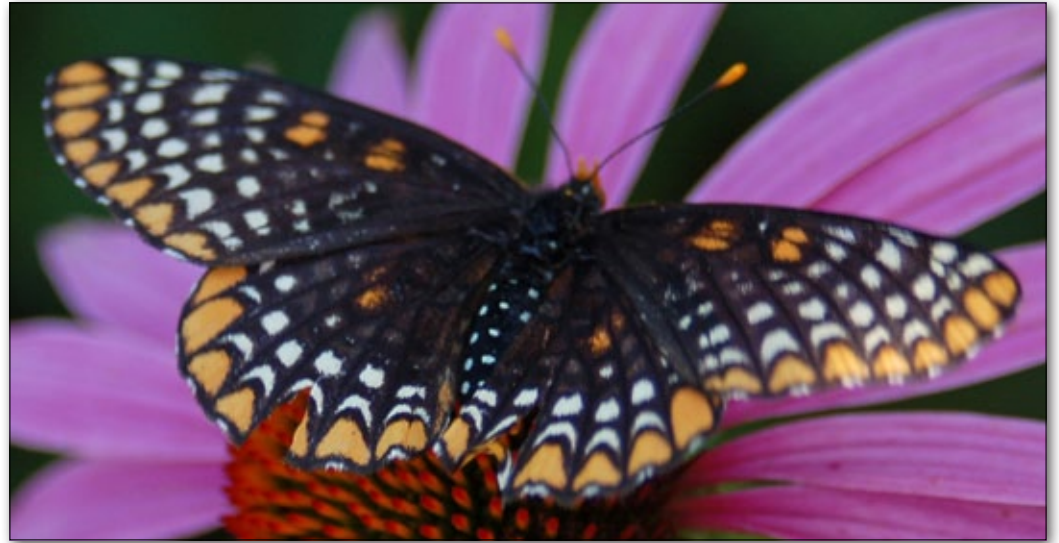




This is a Variegated Fritillary, *Euptoieta claudia*. A large variety of host plants includes violets which we have in abundance.



This Baltimore, *Euphydryas phaeton*, was startling since it was my first time seeing one. It hung around the Cone Flowers and then the prairie patch for several days. The chunks taken out of both hind wings positively identified this individual each time I saw it. Host plants include turtlehead and plantain among others.





I had got some fantastic Buckeye photos last year, but lost them. Fortunately, I got another chance at a *Junonia coenia* this year. Host plants include plantains and vervians. This is a well travelled species that doesn't overwinter very far north.





It's hard to tell if this is a Hickory Hairstreak, *Satyrrium caraevorus*, or a King's Hairstreak, *Satyrrium kingi*, but I favor the former. Note discontinuous second fore wing band. Host plants are hickory and ash.



This is a Banded Hairstreak, *Satyrium calanus*, on Milkweed. The second fore wing band is not discontinuous as in several similar species. Host plants include oak, walnut, and hickory.



This is an Edwards' Hairstreak, *Satyrium edwardsii*, on parsley. The second fore wing band is discontinuous and many of the markings are fully bordered with white. Host plants are oaks. We don't see a lot of hairstreaks, so the variety of species from this genus in our yard was surprising.



Eastern Tailed Blues, *Everes comyntas*, are quite common in our back yard. They tend to frequent the clover and other weeds in the lawn rather than the larger flowers. Despite the name and bluish appearance in flight, the upper side of the wings appears to be a uniform warm gray with two prominent orange eye spots near the edge of each hind wing. The two spots and dash near the base of the lower side of the hind wings in conjunction with the orange eye spots appear to be a good identifier. Host plants are legumes.

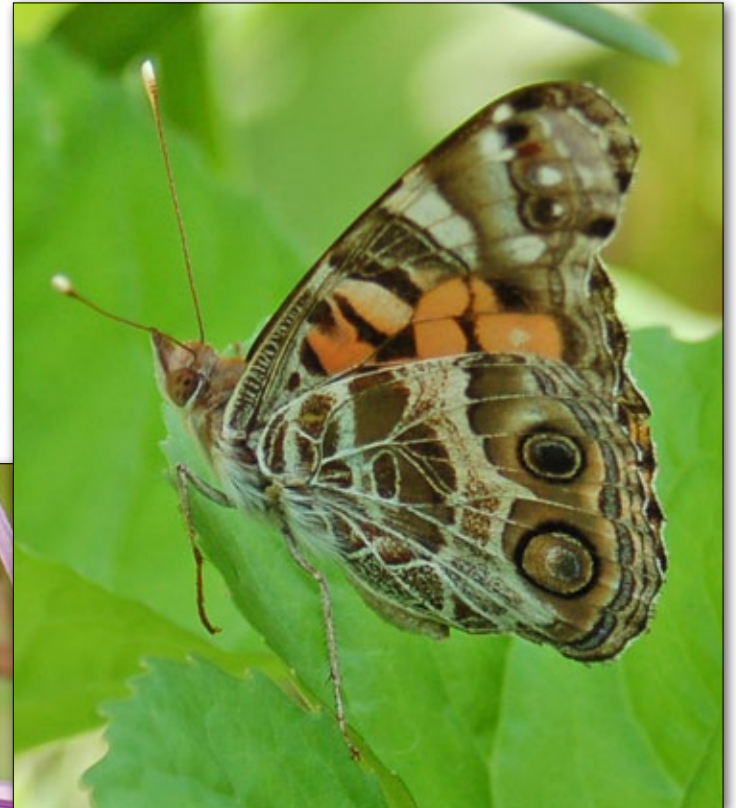




The Northern (Spring) Azures, *Celastrina lucia*, were gone by mid July, replaced by a population of Summer (Spring) Azures, *Celastrina neglecta*. The second species is more blue on the upper side as can be seen from the top of the abdomen and the fringes of the wings.



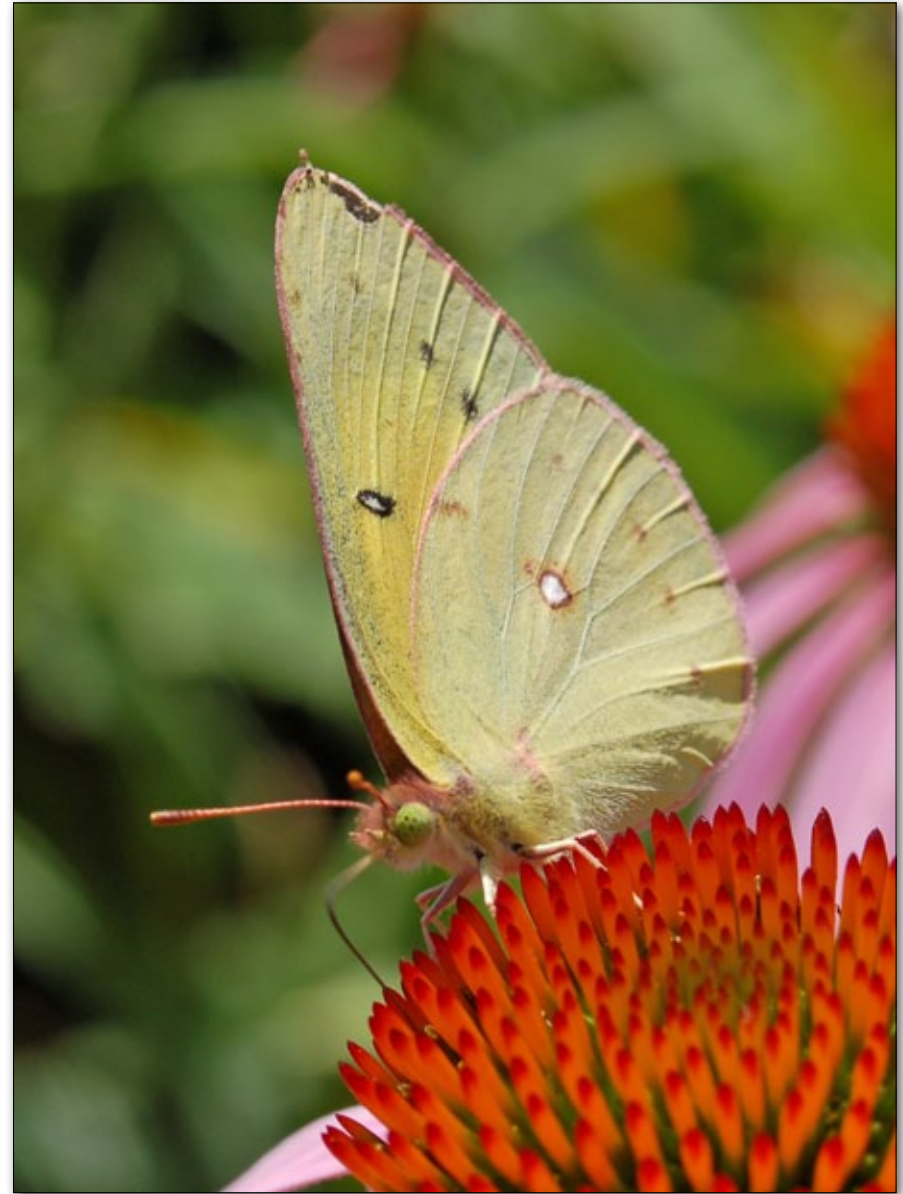
This American Painted Lady, *Vanessa virginiensis*, can be distinguished from the similar Painted Lady by the two large eye spots underneath the hind wing. It reportedly overwinters as a chrysalis or an adult. Due to the excellent condition of this individual, it presumably overwintered as a chrysalis.

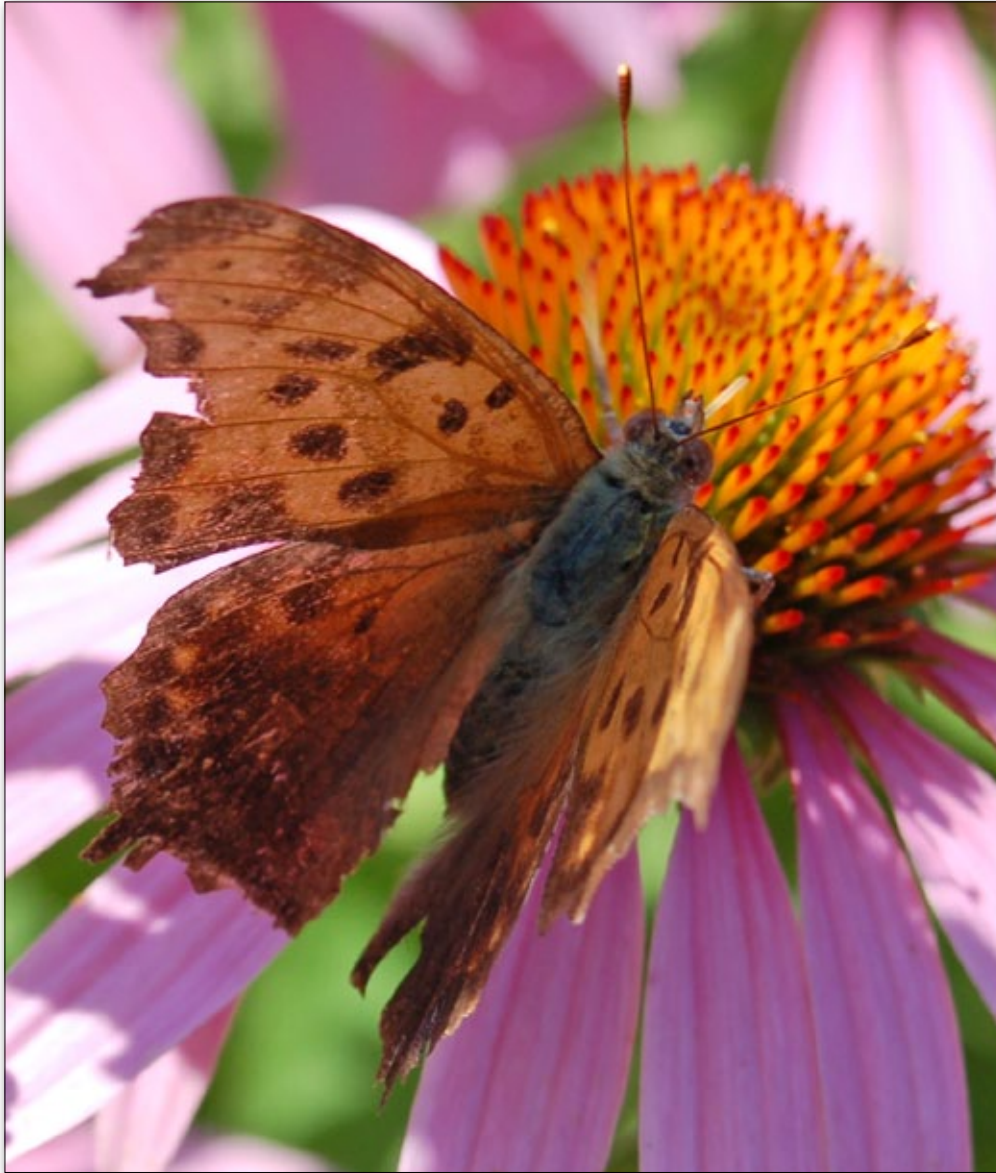


This is a tattered Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui*. Host plants include asters. The wing markings above and below are subtly different from the American Painted Lady. Both species are common in the East.



This is presumably a Common Sulfur, *Colias philodice*, although there are several similar species. Host plants are legumes. Unfortunately, this species rarely opens its wings when sitting.





This is a well-worn Question Mark, *Polygonia interrogationis*, which may have overwintered as an adult. It is one of the Angle-winged Butterflies. Note the silvery dot to left of comma on under side of hind wing. Host plants include elm.

This is a Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta*, on a butterfly bush. It overwinters in the far south and migrates north in the Spring. This specimen is by no means pristine but shows how much abuse and wear butterfly wings can tolerate.



Skipper group

This Yellowpatch Skipper, *Polites coras*, was seen resting in the prairie patch. These started appearing in mid July. Usually photos of insects in the shade lack good focus, but this is an exception.



This Common Checkered Skipper, *Pyrgus communis*, was found on clover in the lawn. This species usually has considerable amount of bluish hair. Host plants are mallows including hollyhocks and hibiscus.





Juvenal's Duskywings, *Erynnis juvenalis*, are frequent visitors. These became more common in July. Hosts plants are oaks. It overwinters as a caterpillar.



Moth group

These two moth species have very different resting positions.





This is an Eight-spotted Forester, *Alypia octomaculata*. It is active during the day and very noticeable. Host plants include grapes and Virginia Creeper.



This is one of those red moths associated with corn I saw last year.



This small midnight blue moth has the same size and appearance as a sunflower seed husk.





These are inch worms, the larva of various kinds of moths.



Up until I photographed this specimen, the Hummingbird Moth, *Hemaris thysbe*, was the only moth in our yard which I thought could easily be mistaken for something else. In fact, I thought this one was a wasp until I took a close look at the photo. Since then I've seen several other similar species. This one looks a lot like the Currant Clearwing, *Synathedon tipuliformis*, which is a European species. Some related species are borers. Note that "borer" describes a larval lifestyle, not a specific type of insect. Many other borers are beetles.





This may be a Large Red-belted Clearwing, *Synathedon culiciformis* or more likely the Apple Clearwing Moth/Small Red-belted Clearwing, *Synathedon myopaeformis*. Both of these are European species. The Small Red-belted Clearwing is known to be in North America.



This one had me scratching my head for a while until I got pictures of a second one. It is a Squash Vine Borer, *Melittia cucurbitae*. The hind legs are covered in hairs. Although they are not used for support, they are constantly in motion. This species is very pretty but nevertheless a significant agricultural pest.

