



Washington Butterfly
Association

*G'nium**

The newsletter of the Washington Butterfly Association

P.O. Box 31317 Seattle WA 98103
www.naba.org/chapters/nabaws

*G'nium is the official greeting of WBA. It is derived from the name of common Washington butterfly food plants, of the genus *Eriogonum*.

WBA Meeting Programs / Events

WBA meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. They are held at the UW Center for Urban Horticulture (3501 NE 41st Street, Seattle) and begin at 7:00 p.m. The first fifteen minutes are used for social reception and viewing of displays.



January 24

**"Winter Party - Potluck and Gift
Exchange"**

Saturday, January 24 6pm -10pm



February 4

"Talkin' Blues" by Jon Pellham

Some of us were "Singin' the Blues" after summer field trips amid name changes of many blue butterfly species. Jon will guide us through all of the Washington Blues explaining the reasons behind the new splits and providing identification tips and geographic locations. This program will give us a running start for the 2009 butterfly season

March 4

"Butterflies and Wildlife of Eastern Australia & Tasmania"
by Dave Nunnallee

This program will focus on the natural history of Queensland and New South Wales areas of Australia and the Australian island of Tasmania. Many butterfly photographs will be shown of all areas along with many of Dave's other outstanding nature photos including marsupials, birds with the occasional fruit bat thrown in.

WBA Mission Statement

The Washington Butterfly Association is devoted to
scientific understanding and enjoyment of butterflies and their ecology
through conservation and education.

Are we too comfortable?

When joining WBA in August of 2005, I was delighted by everything about it--the camaraderie, meetings and programs, field trips, conferences, website, newsletter. Right now we're great. But have we become *too* comfortable, taking all this for granted?

After joining your board, I began to realize that all this wonderful stuff is provided pretty much by the people who have *always* provided it. So, what happens if one or more of them have to drop out or move on to other challenges?

2009 will be our tenth anniversary, and in October, the Board had a retreat to think about the future and where we'd like to be. And guess what turned out to be our top priority--succession planning, that is, where will our new members, board members, and officers come from? (I belong to another outfit that's stumbling because it *did not* address such issues and, over the years, hasn't replaced its key people.)

Our first ten years (ok, nine and a half) have been great. How will the next ten be?

It's up to you.

You are WBA. So, please think about all this and what you can do to make our organization thrive. See **A Request for Volunteers** in this issue of *G/Num* and see where you can help.

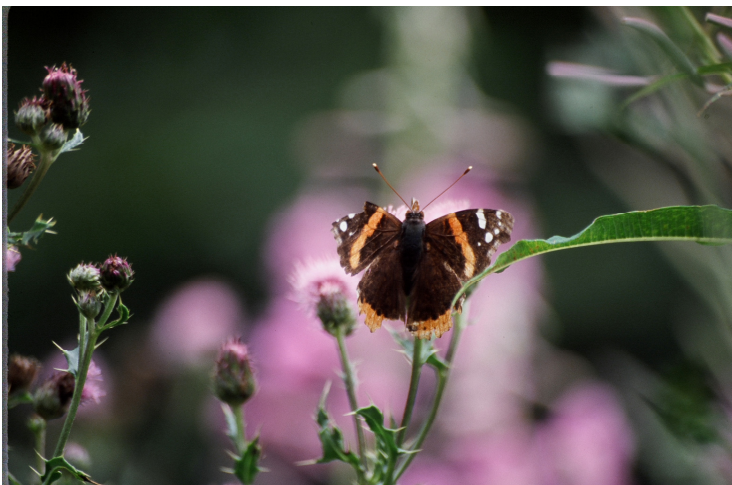
Thanks,

Al Wagar, President

Late Butterflies of the Tahuya Peninsula

Photographs by Idie Ulsh

Late season butterflying can often show us a different side of butterflies than we usually see...their tenacity. I have photographed many of the ones we usually ignore, those not as pretty. Looking at them from a different perspective and admiring their tenacity can give us another dimension of butterflying.



A Request for Volunteers

The Board held a retreat this Fall at which we reviewed our many successes and talked about the potential for doing more to engage our members and accomplish our goals. We have a great organization with an interesting story to tell and important contributions to be made. And you are the great source of energy to do it. As you know the energy we run on is volunteer energy, the cleanest and most renewable and most fun energy there is. Here are some areas where we would like some help. The effort does not have to be great but we really would like to make a start.

EDUCATION

Would you contact teachers you know or provide us with teacher contacts you may have so we can talk about what would be of value to them?

Would you help develop a kit or a unit on butterflies that might be used by teachers - or maybe by a nature day camp or other teaching environment where children could learn about butterflies?

OUTREACH

Would you be willing to help develop a basic presentation on butterflies that could be presented to a wide variety of audiences?

Would you be willing to give such a presentation to audiences of different kinds?

Could you invite a friend to attend one of our member meetings?

NEWSLETTER

Would you be willing to write an article on a butterfly topic of interest to you? It might be a recap of a great speaker we had at a meeting so those who could not attend could be caught up on what they missed. A good field trip could be another topic. A trip you have made with butterfly observations, a good book review or just a good experience you have had might all be fun for us.

HOSPITALITY

Fun and friendliness at the meetings are basic to our approach. Would you be willing to help with organizing for refreshments at the meetings and extending a friendly greeting to new people at our meetings?

CONSERVATION

Could you research a conservation issue related to lepidoptera that we could follow up on?

LEADERSHIP

Would you be willing to be on our Board?

In any of these areas, you do not have to be an expert. We have wonderful experts very willing to share their expertise. What we need are people who help get things started and keep them moving. It is fun to be someone who makes a contribution and gets something started. We all know that the way things happen is not often by execution of top down policy but by the energy of individuals who just do it and get others to feel their energy and do it with them. The ideas and subjects we note above are just suggestions from the Board that we felt were important and in some cases overdue for action. But it is just as good if you have a different suggestion for an action item. We would love to hear from you. Please contact any member of the Board. Contact information is on the back page of every issue of G'Num.



The Western Pygmy Blue is a member of the family Lycaenidae, the large worldwide family of butterflies which includes all blues, coppers, hairstreaks and metalmarks. In Washington there are 46 species of lycaenids, 20 of which are blues. The Western Pygmy Blue is the only blue in our area in the genus *Brephidium*. *Brephidium exilis* is arguably the smallest butterfly in America.

This tiny blue is a year-round resident of arid regions in southern states but has been documented only once in Washington State, on 9-17-04 by Robert M. Pyle at the northern unit of the Umatilla NWR along the Columbia River. This species occurs most years in southern Oregon but may reach Washington only during invasion years. Beyond the Pacific Northwest the Western Pygmy Blue occurs throughout much of the southwestern USA from east Texas to the California coast, and from Oregon south as far as Venezuela. The preferred habitat is low altitude desert, salt marsh, alkaline prairie and waste areas. This is a species of warmer climates and is unlikely to survive northern winters, however climate warming may increase the chances of this species occurring more frequently in Washington.

Brephidium exilis reproduces quickly with continuous multiple broods, perhaps as many as eight or nine broods per year based on observed development rates. It is likely that the juvenile stages occur occasionally in Washington but until further records are obtained the species must be considered single-brooded here. In California eggs were observed laid on leaves and inert surfaces. Host plants include various species of *Atriplex* (Saltbush), *Chenopodium* (Pigweed), *Salsola* (Russian Thistle) and other chenopods which are more common in Washington than *Atriplex*. *Kochia scoparia* (Kochia) is another recorded host and is an abundant weed in the Columbia Basin where this species may be sought. Eggs hatch in three-four days at room temperature. The tiny newly hatched larvae (0.7mm) are very difficult to see let alone tend. Shortly after hatching the larvae bore entirely into *Atriplex* seeds (and likely those of other hosts) where they remain hidden, feeding on the seeds from the inside. The only evidence of larvae visible at this time is occasional frass around seeds with tiny entry holes. The larvae remain inside the seeds during the second instar, but thereafter feed from the exterior. One pupa found wild was anchored by a thin silk girdle within an *Atriplex* seed cluster. Larval development is rapid, pupation occurring about 26 days after oviposition. Adults eclose ten days later, a total of 36 days from newly laid egg to adult. The larvae do not construct nests at any point in their development other than the hollowed out seeds in which they initially live. This species apparently has no diapause stage in southern areas, with broods developing all year, however Scott (1986) recorded *B. exilis* overwintering as pupae in more northerly parts of its range. This species is reportedly myrmecophilous (ant-tended), thus the larvae may be found in the wild by watching for associated ants.

The Western Pygmy Blue is unique in our area. Ventrally the wing pattern is mottled white and gray on the hind wing, with a row of large dark peripheral spots, completely distinct among our fauna. Adults may be observed roosting communally at night on dead or relatively leafless shrubs near the host plants, with up to 8 or 9 adults in close proximity at such roosts. During the day adults frequent plants with fresh, soft clusters of seeds, at least in the case of *Atriplex* food plants. This species can be very common in disturbed or waste areas around its food plants, where the easily overlooked males fly endlessly in search of mates. The females are even less conspicuous, often remaining quietly in the interior of the plants or sipping nectar.

2009 Conference Update

The 2009 Conference will be held in the Yakima area, tentatively scheduled for July 17 – 19. Joyce Bergen is busily exploring the possibilities for meeting rooms and accommodations. More information will be available in the next issue of G'Num.

Butterfly DVD



Our WBA President, Al Wagar, has put together a wonderful DVD of “Cascadian Butterflies in Motion”.

There are 60 common Cascadian butterflies which are identified and shown in taxonomic order. The focus of the DVD is aesthetic rather than technical. Menus allow you to play all or selected parts of the collection. Nearly all of the video clips were taken on field trips of the Washington Butterfly Association.

If you would like one of these DVDs, please make a \$12 check payable to “Washington Butterfly Association” and send to:

Al Wagar, 17076 10th Avenue NW, Shoreline, WA 98177

Bob Pyle's Notes from the Road - Update

Butterfly-A-Thon

Throughout the year of 2008, the noted lepidopterist and writer Robert M. Pyle will be undertaking a historic journey to find, experience, and identify as many of the approximately 800 species of butterflies as possible in the United States and Canada. The literary fruits of this project will be published by the Houghton Mifflin Company as a book entitled **Swallowtail Seasons: The First Butterfly Big Year.**

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Last updated December 16, 2008

To track Bob's progress and / or make a pledge, go to:

<http://www.xerces.org/butterflyathon/>

All proceeds from the Butterfly-A-Thon will benefit the Xerces Society's projects in rare butterfly conservation.

Board Members

Al Wagar	President
Robin Lewis	Vice President
Donna Schaeffer	Secretary
Jennifer Kauffman	Treasurer
Maureen Traxler	Past-President
Jon Pelham	Science Advisor
Richard Youel	At-Large
David Droppers	At-Large
Paul Doan	At-Large
Carolyn Heberlein	Newsletter/Website

Committees

Marty Hanson	Membership
Joyce Bergen	Annual Conference
David & Jo Nunnallee	Field Trips
Idie Ulsh	Programs

Membership Application

<https://wabutterflyassoc.org/membership/>