



Washington Butterfly
Association

*G'nun**

The newsletter of the Washington Butterfly Association

P.O. Box 31317 Seattle WA 98103

<http://wabutterflyassoc.org>

Facebook: Washington Butterfly Association. Instagram: #washingtonbutterflies (anyone can use this hashtag)

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



Our Study Weekend base: Historic Washington Hotel in
Metaline Falls. (Wikimedia Commons)

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Upcoming Programs by Zoom First Wednesday at 6 PM

February 22: Wenatchee Chapter, WA Native Plant Society: David James on Western Monarchs: Migration, Adaptation and Resilience. In-person and Zoom; <https://www.wnps.org/calendar/1782> for more info and to register.

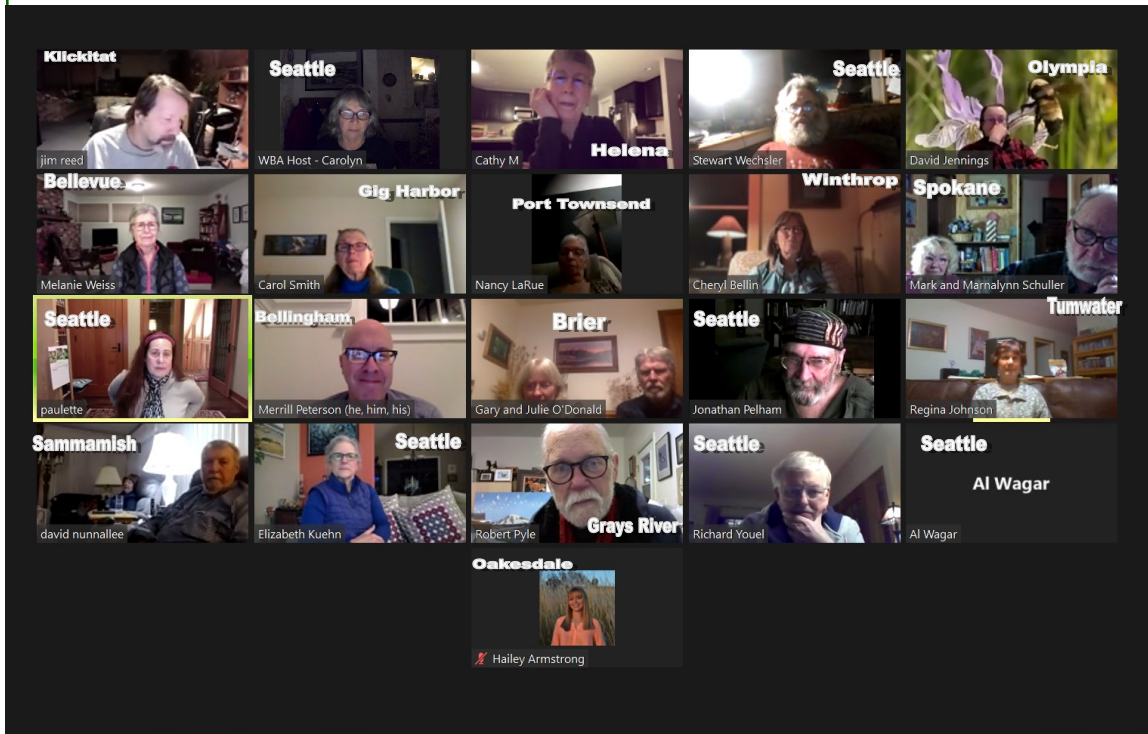
March 1: Jon Pelham, TBD

March 1: Columbia Basin Chapter, WA Native Plant Society: David James on Columbia Basin Plants, Pollinators and ... Wine? How Native Plants are Proving Fruitful in Viticulture. Zoom; see <https://www.wnps.org/calendar/1818> for more info and to register.

April 5: Western Monarchs: The Importance of a Holistic Understanding with David James.

May 3: TBA

Winter Party 2023



We love how the Zoom format allows people to participate from all over the state! While we do miss the potluck and the White Elephant exchange, this has its benefits. And no worries about winter driving!

President's Message from Jim Reed

Happy 2023 Fellow Lepidopterans,

As I write the first President's message of the year, I decided on a series of topics that feel should be addressed. So watch your footing as there is still frost or ice or snow and get prepared for another season of the butterfly.

Wings over the Selkirks

This year the Board has selected to return after a 16 year break to the Selkirk Mountain area in the Northeast Corner of Washington. We have set the date for July 21-23, 2023. That is Friday through Sunday. We will be based in the Metaline Falls/ Ione area. More logistical information still needs to be finalized, but we invite you to save the date! We are negotiating with the Historic Washington Hotel in Metaline Falls at press time. There are a few other motels ranging from just south of Ione to just north of Metaline Falls. The Selkirk Mountains are an extension of the Rocky Mountain Complex and we hope to see some of the fauna associated with that biome. Personally, I hope to see many of my usual "friends" but also a few species that I have either never seen or only rarely. The Alpine Skipper, Peck's Skipper, the Canadian Tiger Swallowtail, the Lustrous Copper, and Edith's Copper could all make appearances. Of course we could also see a White Admiral or a Weidemeyer's Admiral and a Compton's Tortoiseshell as well as a number of those confusing Fritillaries and Checkerspot. It could be a very rewarding adventure!

Proserpinus lucida alert

Too early in the year for Lepidoptera you say? Well, at least down in Klickitat County (and all around Central Washington) there is a cute little Sphinx moth named the Pacific Green Sphinx Moth (*Proserpinus lucida*) also called the Bear Sphinx Moth - although I confess that I do not know how it came to be known as such. It is a day-flying moth that is active even if the weather drops into the 20°F and above range. It does come to high intensity lights at night as well. It flies from February through March from Southern California up to the Canadian Border and over to Idaho as well. I

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Storms Batter California: How did the Overwintering Monarchs Fare? By David James

The Second Western Monarch Summit organized and hosted by Western Monarch Advocates (WMA) was held in San Luis Obispo during January 20-22. I was privileged to be a keynote speaker at this meeting which was attended by a true cross-section of Monarch advocates. This is what makes the Summit so unique. It is not a gathering of scientists alone it is a gathering of everyone who loves Monarchs! And it is this unique blend of advocates and scientists that leads to exceptional education and excitement.

On my way to the summit, I wanted to get an update on how Monarch populations at coastal overwintering sites coped with the atmospheric hose that they endured from soon after Christmas until mid-January. Ten major storms hit the California coast during this period. I visited 11 overwintering sites during January 18-21 under good weather conditions (sunny, 55-65 F) to estimate population size and to compare it to estimates I made at each site during November 21-23.

I saw an estimated **54,858** Monarchs at the 11 sites in January compared to 87,500 in November. **This is a loss of about 37.3%** which is close to the average % loss of Monarchs between Thanksgiving and New Year for the past four years (39%). Although my sample size was small, these data provide some optimism that the overwintering population was not substantially damaged by the three weeks of strong storms.

I saw big differences in how the populations at different sites weathered the storms. Gully-like overwintering sites oriented towards the coastline may have become 'wind-tunnels' in the storms and these sites had the least number of butterflies remaining. Conversely, overwintering sites within climax woodland (e.g. Pacific Grove) appeared to have weathered the storms best with minimal loss of butterflies. One of these sites near Pismo Beach actually doubled its population.

It is interesting and salient to note that none of the sites showed substantial mortality of butterflies had occurred. Dead butterflies on the ground were uncommon at all sites. Instead, it appears that butterfly loss at sites was likely a result of wind-driven dispersal inland. These butterflies, although now likely alone, still have a good chance of surviving the next few weeks, until the normal time the colonies begin their break-up in the latter half of February. If temperatures in coastal California remain below 70 F during this period (as forecast), reproductive dormancy will be maintained and the need to lay eggs prevented. While mating is beginning to occur at overwintering colonies, the ovaries of most females do not yet contain mature eggs.

Overwintering Monarchs, Pismo Beach. (D. James)



Although limited, my survey provides a good prognosis for survival of most of the remaining overwintering Monarchs in California. How well this population repopulates the greater west in the coming months depends a lot on the weather conditions over the next 6-8 weeks.

Finally, the Summit concluded with a new sense of optimism for survival of the Monarch in the west. There is no doubt, that the Monarch has an army of committed supporters, all working hard to provide and protect habitat, reduce pesticide use and to spread the word that the king of butterflies, and all butterflies need our care and attention.

Watching Washington Butterflies with Bob Pyle

Number Forty-nine Sunset of a Collection

Last week, I shipped off the last of my butterfly collection, after 65 years.

We each have different, and sometimes mutually antagonistic, feelings about butterfly collecting. I'm not going to go into all that here. How every animal (including every human) takes life in order to live, and we each decide what we are willing to kill for how we wish to live: will we catch fish, and eat them? Swat a mosquito? Crush a clothes moth to save the cashmere, or pinch and pin a bigger, prettier lepidopteran to feed the mind and knowledge? We already know all the inconsistencies, small hypocrisies, and ethical gymnastics of our individual decisions. And we know that except for the occasional conversion, we're not likely ever to see eye-to-eye when emotion outweighs the facts, as it sometimes will (sometimes for the better) for us all.

Nor do I need to recapitulate the extraordinary value of natural history collections to human culture and wellbeing over the centuries. How the assembly of long series of specimens from across their range may enable the study, classification, depiction, popularization, and ultimately protection of plants and animals otherwise likely to be destroyed along with their habitat before even being named. That this activity with insects comes at zero meaningful cost to the populations involved, for most species. And how without the collectors we would be in the dark about who and what we snap with our cameras—bereft of field guides, reference collections, experts, and scientific authority. No, this has all been said before.

Like many lepidopterists of the 20th century, I began as a boy (it was mostly boys, mostly around that age). I'd been an utterly devoted seashell collector from the age of seven, but landlocked Colorado was a really dumb place to be a young conchologist, so I resorted to a Shell of the Month Club and other secondary sources. I began to notice checkered skippers and swallowtails in the vacant lots and parks, and that there were many more of them than the absent land snails I desperately longed for. Then one day in the spring of 1958 my stepbrother, Bruce Campbell, said he was going out to collect insects for a scouting merit badge, and invited me along. Of course I went. Bruce quit the next day. I quit last week.

This is not the place to describe the excitement of that initial field trip and every summer since, or to summarize the half-century-plus of adventure, learning, delight, satisfaction, intellectual fulfillment, bracing exercise, conservation awakening and a lifetime's response, participation in a great enterprise of peers, pure thrill, peace, joy, frustration, fruitful collaboration, deep friendship and fellowship, identity, purpose, motivating love of land and life, worship of all habitats and their denizens, ultimate understanding of adaptation as the basis of everything that really matters, and just plain fun. As Vladimir Nabokov explained it for *Vogue* in 1972, when asked what made a perfect walk for him: "Any first walk in any new place—especially a place where no lepidopterist has been before me. There still exist unexplored mountains in Europe and I can still walk twenty kilometers a day. The ordinary stroller might feel on sauntering out a twinge of pleasure...but the cold of the metal netstick in my right hand magnifies the pleasure to almost intolerable bliss."

Not to say that this panoply of pleasures and personal contentment is not available through one's camera or baby blues as well as a butterfly net. They aren't the property of collectors alone. Let's leave that there and ask a different question: with all of its benefits, why would I be leaving butterfly collecting now? And what does that really involve?

To do it right, making and keeping a worthwhile collection entails a lot of work. There is the safe storage of specimens until ready to prepare. Then



Insect collection. (NC State Extension)



Three girls at the WBA Cle Elum Study Weekend, Reecer Canyon, 2017. (R. Johnson)

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comes the moisture-relaxing of the dried insects, unless mounted while fresh, and the laborious, painstaking spreading itself. Every example must be properly labeled with at least minimal data, which takes a lot of time and effort. But it is essential. Unlabeled specimens are just curios. To give them their scientific value, and to justify and honor the lives taken, they *must* have data. From there, we need to care for the collection. Chiefly, this means keeping the specimens dry, cool, dark, and protected from insects that will inevitably destroy them if they gain access—chiefly carpet beetles (dermestids) and book lice (psocids). Air-tight storage, fumigation, and/or freezing are usually employed for this purpose. Anything less than careful curation is a travesty.

Some people are natural curators, for whom application of their dexterity and sense of order may give as much pleasure as the field work. Not me. Curating my growing collection was always a labor, but always worth it for its many satisfactions: studying, sharing, learning, constantly surrounded by beauty. I had the best science fair projects on wood nymph evolution and florescence of scales under ultraviolet. And for a curious fourteen-year-old, receiving packages of swapped specimens from Ukraine, Rhodesia, Yucatan, or Tennessee was more exciting than finding buried treasure. I joined the Lepidopterists' Society as a kid in 1959, and many of my finest lifelong relationships grew out of that long affiliation. My collection made me the biologist I am, leading directly to the UW, JPP, *WWB*, Charles Remington, Yale, and my entire life since. But the time comes when the required output exceeds what one has left to put out.



Dermestid beetle damage. (Anon.)

But beyond the individual, what is the point? What becomes of all those felled fliers, and why? Many people think of butterfly collectors as they might stamp collectors, just gatherers of objects to which they take a fancy. That's not fair to philatelists and certainly not lepidopterists. The reality is that much of the most valuable work in entomology is performed by self-taught amateurs ("one who loves"), such as Charles Darwin himself. But the rationale doesn't matter. What does, is that when the personal need for private collections has finished, many of them end up donated to a university, city museum, or other institution, and become part of the great public repositories where civilization stores its treasures and builds its knowledge of the world and its works. Without the U. W.'s Burke Museum and its collection, curated in turn by the giants O. B. Johnson, Melville Hatch, and Jonathan Pelham, and my lucky association with it, there would have been no *WWB*, *Cascadia*, or Pyle & LaBar, in fact no RMP, JPP, or Idie Ulsh as you know and love them, and no WBA—just as the Lep Soc and NABA owed their existence to the collections of the American Museum of Natural History and Smithsonian. That the Audubon Society arose from Audubon the collector/killer is not a tragedy, but a happy inevitability. Insuring the future of one's private collection may be the collector's most important duty.

Now, with so very many butterfly lovers loose upon the land, of course most of them must be non-lethal, or there actually could be a conservation problem with collecting. But we run the risk of swinging too far. There are fewer young collectors coming along, boys or girls, all the kids umbilically connected to devices instead of free outdoor play. Yet what remains to be learned from specimen-based research, more than anything the composition and ecological needs of the earth's little-known and rapidly vanishing diversity, is profound. We need curious, dedicated young lepidopterists more than ever.

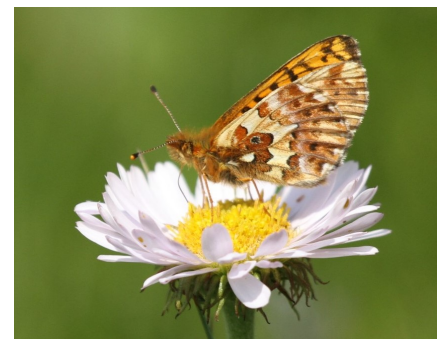
Norbert Kondla, one of the co-authors of the new Asher's Blue, has been sharing many photographs of live and pinned arctic butterflies on the NW Leps list-serve lately, including highly variable lesser fritillaries and sulphurs. Some might be appalled at the sheer number of his beautifully prepared specimens. But if they were to examine the huge array of variation, and consider the truly vast landscape from which Norbert collected them, and finally consider the short- and long-term consequences for the Northlands from oil, climate change, and all the rest, they just might acquire a glimmer of the power of a butterfly collection as a crucial window on a world at risk.



Labels on a pinned specimen.
(Ken-ichi Ueda)



Dermestid beetle larvae
on a pinned specimen.
(Michal Manas)



Arctic Fritillary. (D. Robichaud)

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Field Trip Plans 2023

Please note that we are not calling it a schedule! After last year's weather fiascos, we are not setting definitive dates for most trips until we see what the weather does and if butterflies actually fly. You will need to sign up for a trip, to be notified when the actual date is.

The butterfly season has begun! A lone Milbert's Tortoiseshell was sighted in Walla Walla County on Jan. 20, the first butterfly of 2023. Carl Barrentine reported 4 moth species in his yard during the first half of January. It will only get better from this time forward.

WBA's 2023 Field Trip Schedule is in the works. We are trying something new this season. A few outings will have set dates (TBD). However, a few others will note the site with a prospective date range (TBD). We had many cancellations last year due to inclement weather, and to a late wet spring making it hard to determine when target species would be flying. If you are interested in one of the trips with a date range, sign up with the trip leader now. You will be contacted as the season moves forward with a firm date.

WBA will continue to monitor and adapt to COVID levels and guidelines for our state.

To whet your appetite for the warm season ahead, our "working schedule" follows. A final schedule with any updates will be sent out via Noticeline in late February, and also posted on the WBA website: <https://wabutterflyassoc.org/>

Elfin Quest, Hoodspport, late April, TBD. Melanie Weiss

Explore along forest roads and power line corridors where Hoary Elfin, Moss's Elfin, Western Pine Elfin and Bramble Green Hairstreak are known to fly. A few other surprises may come our way, too.

Sign up with Melanie: Level 3

- **San Juan Island** trip, target species is the endangered Island Marble. Date: May 31 and June 1.

Our two day visit will include volunteer and viewing activities. We are arranging with On Sacred Ground Land Trust for an opportunity to perform habitat restoration for the Island Marble. In addition, we will be given a short tour of the rearing lab by the park biologists, and will be led to several sites where the species is known to fly. Note: viewing of this endangered species will be from outside the fenced habitat. Binoculars and zoom cameras are suggested. We will be visiting at peak flying time for the species. Fingers crossed that we will be able to observe activity, but no guarantee. It will be a grand adventure whatever occurs. Difficulty level 2. **National Park; no nets.**

We have been advised that camping and motel reservations should be made early for this beautiful location. I have links for campgrounds, some of which open for reservations on March 1. A ferry ride is part of the fun!

Please sign up ASAP with Melanie if you are interested. Group size will be limited to 10 participants. The confirmed date will be emailed to participants with additional information.

Trip leader: Melanie Weiss,

- **Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve**, south of Olympia, mid May.

No Nets, and Stay On Trail. Camas, spring butterflies, and grassland birds. But, please note that Mima Mounds is right next to a busy gun club; if you are very gun-shy, this is not the trip for you. It is perfectly safe, just it can be very loud. Difficulty level 2—no slopes, some paved ADA-accessible trail as well as gravel. Regina Johnson,



Island Marble habitat. (R. Johnson)



Prairie wildflowers at Mima Mounds: Common Camas and the federally-listed Golden Paintbrush. (D. Wilderman)

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- **Gold Hunter's Hairstreak, Klickitat**, late May-early June, TBD. Sign up with Jim Reed

- **Boulder Creek, Okanogan County**, early June TBD. Cheryl Bellin
Explore several roadside areas on the way to Freezeout Ridge. Target species is the Freija Fritillary which resides in Washington state only in this northern region of Okanogan County. Blues, elfins, duskywings and swallowtails are also likely. As time permits we will swing by a Cub Creek hotspot which last year resulted in 28 species for the day. All wheel drive and higher clearance recommended. Sign up with Cheryl: Limited to 10-12 participants, Level 2

- **'Monarch weekend'**, June 10-11, may be one or two days, TBD. David James
A visit to one or two Monarch breeding sites along the Columbia and/or Snake Rivers (eg Crab Creek, McNary Dam) to spot the (hopefully) newly arrived migrant Monarchs from California. If we don't see Monarchs we will delight in the heavenly scent of milkweed in peak bloom and likely see Viceroy's!
Sign up with David James:

- **LeonaLand**: last 2 weeks of June.
A trip to the High Pumice Desert of Central Oregon to see the world's smallest and rarest butterfly. Leona's Little Blue occurs only in a 15 square mile high desert area east of Crater Lake National Park. Join David James for his annual monitoring of the population of this charismatic but vulnerable butterfly. Precise dates to be decided in late May.

- **Bethel Ridge**, June 24. David James
A favorite high-elevation site west of Yakima that should be in peak bloom with abundant butterflies. A good selection from all families should be present, including Western Sulphurs and Mountain Parnassians.
Sign up with David James:

- **Big Four Ice Caves, Mtn. Loop Hwy.** July 5 & Aug 21. David Droppers
Due to the crowds, this will be a weekday trip. Sign up for one or both trips. Highly recommended that if you make one, you should try to make the other - always fun to see what a difference a few weeks makes in the fauna.
Sign up with David Droppers:

- **First Creek (off Reecer main road)** at ~6000', July 15. David James
Expect to see anywhere from 20-30 species at this newly discovered site, including six fritillary, four white/sulphur and three checkerspot species. With expert WBA eyes focused on this habitat, we may well turn up additional species!
Sign up with David James:

- **WBA Butterfly Weekend, July 21-23. Metaline Falls.**
We will be based at the Historic Washington Hotel in Metaline Falls and fan out from there for our field trips. Lodging and camping facilities are somewhat limited so don't delay in making reservations.

- **White Pass exploratory trip**, early August, one weekend day.
We will explore under the chair lifts at the ski area, the Nordic area, and various lakes/ponds/wet meadows/campgrounds along the highway and the PCT. Difficulty level 3. Regina Johnson:

- **TBD, Aug. 4.** Location to be determined based on current 'hot spots'.
Sign up with Cathy Clark: Dan Dunphy:



Salmo Mountain Lookout, Selkirk Mtns. (R. Johnson)



Bethel Ridge. (R. Johnson)



Pacific Crest Trail north of White Pass. (R. Johnson)

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President's Message continued

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have only seen males as females may be sedentary or are not attracted to lights. Another interesting characteristic is that the adults do not feed but given that the larvae graze on members of the Evening Primrose family and are active in February it is not surprising. For more info check out Merrill Peterson's Pacific Northwest Moth site on the internet. Go ahead and google it - it is another whole new world out there.

And then there are field trips...

Be sure to check out our field trip list for 2023. Melanie Weiss continues to put together a fantastic array of places to go and see butterflies. At the time of this writing, there are 15 -16 trips scheduled with nine different trip leaders, WBA has its own set of biodiversity! Come join us and visit some old favorites and please note that there are some new places to explore. I know that I am developing my list of must-sees. Have a great 2023!

Jim

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Watching Washington Butterflies continued

And so I come to my own denouement as a collector. For many years I have spalled off parts of my precious leps to their forever homes: most of my original lode to the Burke long ago, when it came time to leave Seattle for years of travel, further study, and working elsewhere. Later, many specimens to the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, and others to both the AMNH and the USNM in New York and D. C.; and many more to the Burke over the following years. In more recent times, all of my Butterfly Big Year vouchers went into the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity in Gainesville, Florida, one of the most important collections anywhere. The bulk of what was left now resides in the Oregon State Arthropod Collection at OSU in Corvallis, our primary regional home for these priceless lives preserved. And just last week, I shipped off the last carton—long-saved 1960s and later material from my long-term study site of the High Line Canal in Colorado, many collected with my mother, as well as Rocky Mountain treasures that were hard to let go. They went to my boyhood second home, the Denver Museum of Science and Nature, back where it all began. These creatures carried not only great sentimental value, but conservation importance too, since most of those habitats and butterfly populations I grew up with and learned from are now gone. Had it not been for them, and the right books and people, I would not be who I am.



The author, with Marsha. (Deb Piot)

Does this mean I am hanging up my famous net, Marsha? Heck, no! I've actually collected relatively few butterflies for many years, preferring to enjoy them alive and having written the first American books on butterfly watching. I mean,



Mariposa Copper series. (Dana Ross)

who really *likes* to kill butterflies? I have done mostly catch and release for a long time, where it serves the purpose, taking specimens only when I judged it necessary for a particular research project, conservation survey, important distributional records, or the like. For example, my recent review of the Mariposa Copper with Paul Hammond, naming nine new subspecies and detailing acute conservation needs for several of them including the Makah Copper, depended on over 6,000 specimens from several museums, to get their identities, whereabouts, histories, and ecological requirements right. Some of these I had collected myself. But now? To the extent I can still go afield, I shall certainly swing my net, as it is no less fun and instructive than ever, and I still have so much to learn from the animals up close. But if I collect anything, it will go straight to Corvallis—no longer my responsibility. For above all, that's what natural history collecting is: a big responsibility, to all those little lives: that they be honored by proper treatment, as the best hunters have always known; remembered for what they've taught us and brought us, and dedicated to the pursuit of truth, understanding, coexistence, and survival of their kind and all the others, in a world where the butterfly net can still be mightier than the bulldozer when wielded with right mind and kind hand.

Field Trips 2023 continued

- **Big Four Ice Caves,** Aug 21, Monday. David Droppers

This is a followup to David's earlier July 5 trip. Always fun to see what a difference a few weeks makes in the fauna. Sign up with David Droppers: lycaenid@gmail.com



WBA at the top of Crystal Mtn. in 2022.

- **Crystal Mountain, near Mt. Rainier,** Aug. 25, Friday. Regina Johnson, Melanie Weiss

A repeat of last season's popular trip. We will take the gondola up to the top of the ridge and butterfly in the alpine meadows along a trail with stunning views and late season fliers and flowers. Requires paying gondola fee.

Sign up with Regina Johnson: reg@madronas.net Limited to 12, Level 3 (slopes, altitude)

- Quartz Mountain, possible late summer trip. Melanie Weiss

Perhaps as the season progresses, a few more trips will be added. Keep watch for Noticeline announcements of any "Flash" field trips that may occur throughout the season. Possibilities: Western Pygmy Blue sightings, Coronis Fritillary migration, late season fliers.

And now for something completely different:

- **A Royal Tour of the Western Monarchy:** Thanksgiving week (November 19-25)

Tour of up to 25 Monarch butterfly overwintering sites from Pismo beach north up the coast to Marin County over 5-6 days with David James. See well-known winter aggregation sites like Pismo Beach and Pacific Grove but also lesser-known sites in places like Cambria and Bolinas. Email david_james@wsu.edu if you are interested, for further details.

2023 Field Trip Protocols

Non-consumptive appreciation of butterflies is central to our purpose, basic to our approach, and the guiding principle behind general membership field trips. Collecting of adult butterflies is not allowed on these trips. Collecting of eggs and larvae for rearing is accepted on condition that individuals raised to adult stage are released at their original location.

HOW TO SIGN UP: Anyone can sign up by contacting the trip leader. (See Board and Committee list in this issue for contact information)

Check our website and Facebook page for last-minute additions (Flash Field Trips!).

DIFFICULTY RATINGS:

- 1 Easy, mostly by car, minor walking along roads.
- 2 Fairly limited walking, some slopes may involved.
- 3 Moderate, 3-4 miles walking, or with some slopes.
- 4 Difficult, hiking required off road, may have short steep sections, total of 4 miles or so.
- 5 Strenuous, extended hiking on trails with steep terrain, 4-8 miles.



Leona's Little Blue. (D. James)



Island Marble. (C. Bellin)

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