



Nectar News

September & October 2011

Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association

What happens to a butterfly in winter?

Each type of butterfly has her own system for coping with the winter. The butterfly life cycle goes through an egg stage, a caterpillar stage, a pupa stage and an adult winged stage. This gives the insect several choices for meeting hard times. It may survive the winter as an egg, a caterpillar a pupa or as a winged adult.

Some butterflies sleep through the winter in the egg stage. The beautiful Mama lays her last brood of eggs on the proper plant and perishes with the first cold days. The little eggs in their sturdy case wait out the winter until the warm spring hatches them into caterpillars.

Several butterflies spend the winter in the pupa stage. This seems sensible since the pupa is a sleeping stage in any case. What's more, a pupa is well protected in a durable overcoat. The common white cabbage butterfly is one who sleeps through the winter as a chrysalis. This insect emigrated from Europe to the eastern seaboard of America in the year 1868. It thrived on our cabbage patches and certain plants of the mustard family. It spread westward with each year and in 20 years it reached the Rockies. It now enjoys life from coast to coast.

This white butterfly with black tips produces two to three broods each summer. The last brood of caterpillars turn into chrysalis neat green bundles attached to the underside of their favorite leaves, and they

stay that way until spring.

The viceroy is an unusual butterfly because it spends the winter in the caterpillar stage. This orange and brown lady very much like the handsome monarch, produces two or more generations each summer. The eggs are laid on poplar or willow, on which the caterpillars feed. Come fall, Mama perishes leaving behind a brood of fat, buff colored larvae. These caterpillars roll themselves up in old leaves and go to sleep until spring.

Most amazing is the big, beautiful monarch, a butterfly who migrates for the winter. Two to three broods develop through the summer feeding on lush milkweed leaves. Come fall, the entire adult tribe assembles to fly south. They fly in fluttering clouds for hundreds of miles down to Mexico. Come spring, the battered remnants of the vast army make the long flight back north, laying eggs along the way. The next few generations continue the journey north, some way up into Canada.

One whole family of butterflies hibernates through the winter in the adult winged stage. They are the 25 anglewing cousins. The anglewing butterflies have angles and notches along their wings giving them a lacy appearance. The biggest of them is the handsome mourning cloak, a dark brown butterfly with wings bordered with yellow and a row of blue buttons.

In the fall, the adult anglewing seeks a cozy place to hide. She folds her wings tip to tip and sleeps in a hollow tree or under a heap of old leaves. She means to come out early in the spring. But a warm winter's day may fool her. Maybe you have seen a dark mourning cloak butterfly fluttering over the sunlit snow. The lovely creature woke up thinking it was spring. She will soon recognize her mistake and go back to her winter quarters for a few more weeks or months.

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Around The Feeder: *Erynnis baptisiae*

Wild Indigo Duskywing
Erynnis baptisiae

Family: *Hesperiidae*

Subfamily: *Pyrginae*

The Wild Indigo Duskywing is named for one of its preferred larval hosts. Common throughout much of the eastern US., it has become more widespread in recent decades as a result of its opportunistic ability to feed on the introduced ground cover Crown Vetch. As a result, it is now often found along highways or other rights-of-way. Within Michigan, the species is primarily restricted to the southernmost counties where it remains local and generally uncommon. Adults have a quick, scurrying flight. Males frequently puddle at damp ground.

Identification: Upside of forewing is dark on the basal half and lighter on the outer half, with a distinct orange-brown patch at the end of the cell. Male has a costal fold containing yellow scent scales; female has a patch of scent scales on the 7th abdominal segment.



Life History: Males perch in open areas on low shrubs to wait for females. Eggs are deposited singly on the host plant. Fully-grown caterpillars from the second brood hibernate.

Wing Span: 1 3/8 - 1 5/8 inches (3/5 - 4.1 cm).

Caterpillar Hosts: Usually Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*), but also others including Wild Blue Indigo (*B. australis*), Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*), False Lupine (*Thermopsis villosa*), and Crown Vetch (*Coronilla varia*).

Adult Food: Nectar from flowers of blackberry, white sweet clover, dogbane, sunflower, crimson clover, and probably others.

Habitat: Open woods and barrens for native hosts. Highways, railroad beds, and upland fields for the introduced crown vetch.

Range: Southern New England and southern Ontario

west to central Nebraska; south to Georgia, the Gulf Coast, and south central Texas. The Wild Indigo Duskywing is rapidly expanding its range and abundance by colonizing plantings of crown vetch along roadways and railroad beds. Comments: The Columbine, Wild Indigo, and Persius Duskywings belong to the "Persius complex," a confusing group of very similar butterflies.

Conservation: Not usually required.

NCGR: G5 - Demonstrably secure globally, though it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery.

Management Needs: None reported.



In The Ground: *Baptisia australis*

Baptisia australis, commonly known as Blue Wild Indigo or Blue False Indigo, is a herbaceous perennial in the pea family. It is native to much of the central and eastern North America and is particularly common in the Midwest, but it has also been introduced well beyond its natural range. The plant may attain a height of 1.5 meters (5 ft) and a width of 1 meter (3.2 ft), but most often it is encountered at about 1 meter tall (3.2 ft) with a 0.6 meter spread (2 ft). It is well known in gardens due to its attractive pea-like, deep blue flowers that emerge on spikes in the late spring and early summer. It requires little maintenance and is quite hardy. The seed pods are popular in flower arrangements, which also contribute to its popularity in cultivation. Several American Indians tribes made use of the plant for a variety of purposes. The Cherokees used it as a source of blue dye, a practice later copied by European settlers. They also would use the roots in teas as a purgative or to treat tooth aches and nausea, while the Osage made an eyewash with the plant.

The name of the genus is derived from the Ancient Greek word *bapto*, meaning "to dip" or "immerse", while the specific name *australis* is Latin for "southern".

Additional common names of this plant exist, such as Indigo Weed, Rattleweed, Rattlebush and Horse Fly Weed. The common name "Blue False Indigo" is derived from it being used as a substitute for the superior dye producing plant,

namely *Indigofera tinctoria*. *B. australis* grows best in lime free, well-drained stony soil in full sun to part shade. Naturally it can be found growing wild at the borders of woods, along streams or in open meadows. It often has difficulty seeding itself in its native areas due to parasitic weevils that enter the seed pods, making the number of viable seeds very low.

Description: *B. australis* is a herbaceous perennial that reproduces both sexually and asexually by means of its spreading rhizomes. The plants are erect and emerge from the rhizomatic network. The roots themselves are branched and deep, which helps the plant withstand periods of drought. When dug up they are woody and black in color and show tubercles, wart-

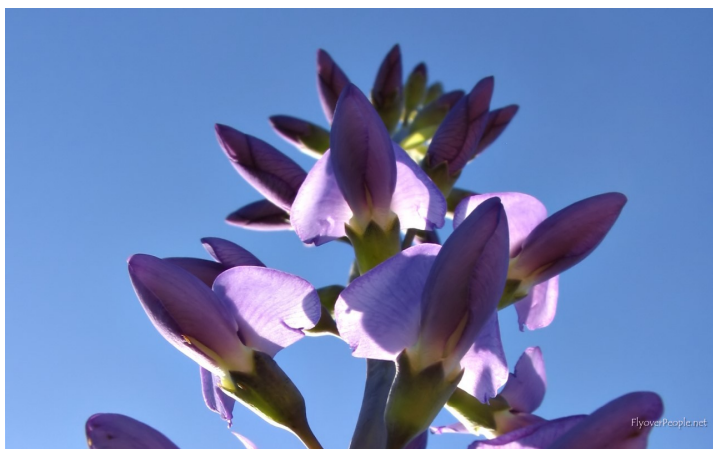
like projections found on the roots. The plants branch extensively about halfway up. The stems are glabrous, or hairless. If they are broken, a sap will be secreted that turns a dark blue



upon contact with the air.

The trifoliate leaves are a grey-green in color and are arranged alternately. The leaves are further divided into clover-like leaflets that are obovate in shape, or wider towards the apex. Flower spikes appear in June. Emerging at the pinnacle are short, upright terminal racemes that have pea-like flowers that vary in color from light blue to deep violet. The flowers, which bloom from April through August depending on the region, are bisexual and are roughly 2.5 cm long (1 inch). The fruit is a bluish black inflated and hardened pod that ranges from 2.5 to 7.5 cm in length (1 to 3 inches) by 1.25 to 2.5 cm (0.5 to 1 inch). They are oblong in shape and are sharply tipped at the apex. At maturity they will contain many loose seeds within. The seeds are yellowish brown, kidney shaped and about 2 mm (0.08 inches) in size. The leaves emerge about one month before flowering and are shed approximately one month after the pods form. Once the seeds are fully mature, the stems turn a silverish grey and break off from the roots. The pods stay attached and are blown with the stems to

(Please see "Wild" Continued on page 4)



Are Alien Plants 'Bad'?

Dr. Douglas Tallamy of the University of Delaware talks about his book *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, which argues that by trading wild spaces for uncontrolled expansion and replacing native species with alien species, we've threatened the survival of wildlife. Dr. Tallamy passionately argues that it isn't too late to save ecological communities, and that we all have a significant role in the process. Sponsored by: U-M Program in the Environment; U-M School of Natural Resources and Environment; U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum; Michigan Botanical Club Huron Valley Chapter; Wild Ones Ann Arbor Chapter; and the Audubon Society Washtenaw Chapter. **Free.**

Location: Off Site

Category: Community Education

Date: 10/27/2011

Date Details: Stamps Auditorium, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor

Time: 7:30 p.m.

(“Wild” Continued from page 3)
another location.

Uses: *Baptisia* has been used as an antiseptic, anti-catarhal, febrifuge, and stimulant purgative. This plant is said to stimulate immune responses to infection, and is used for ear, nose and throat problems, laryngitis, tonsillitis, as a wash for mouth ulcers, and a douche for leucorrhea. *Baptisia* is considered toxic. Do not use this plant unless under the supervision of a trained qualified practitioner. It is not for long term use and not to be used if pregnant. The bark of the root is harvested in autumn. The leaves may be harvested anytime.

Native Americans used root tea of False Blue Indigo as an emetic and purgative. A cold tea was given to stop vomiting, a root poultice used as an anti-inflammatory, and bits of the root were held in the mouth to treat toothaches. *Baptisia* species are being investigated for use as a poten-

tial stimulant of the immune system. A decoction of stems has been used for pneumonia, tuberculosis and influenza, tips of stems combined with twigs of the Utah juniper, *Juniperus osteosperma*, have been used as a kidney medicine. *Baptisia* has also been used as a tea (tisane) for smallpox and externally as a cleansing wash. Trials using the extract of *Baptisia* to treat typhoid fever were made in the early 19th century. Current uses for this plant include: infection of upper respiratory tract, common cold, tonsillitis, stomatitis, inflammation of mucous membrane, fever, ointment for painless ulcers, inflamed nipples. Over-medicating will produce vomiting, diarrhea, gastrointestinal complaints, and spasms due to quinolizidine alkaloid content.

The pods are utilized in dried arrangements. Wild Blue Indigo is said to repel flies when kept near farm animals. Hang a bunch of *Baptisia* off the tack of a

working animal. The plant is also used in witchcraft in spells or rituals of protection. Keep a leaf in your pocket or add to an amulet for protection.

Cultivation: *B. australis* is the most commonly cultivated species in its genus in North America, and it is also cultivated beyond its native continent in other areas such as Great Britain. It is considered a desirable plant in the garden due to its deep blue to violet spring flowers, the attractive light green compound leaves, and also for the somewhat unusual oblong fruits that emerge in the late summer. They grow to about 90 to 120 cm tall (3 to 4 feet) in height with a similar spread. Like other members of the genus, they have very deep taproots, which makes them quite difficult to move once planted. The plants thrive in full sun and require water only in times of low rainfall. One slightly negative fea-

(Please see “Blue” Continued on page 5)

How to Winterize Butterfly Bush

Butterfly bushes are a popular addition in many gardens as they attract multiple butterflies and hummingbirds. They have beautiful long purple, white or pink flowers, depending on the type you have. Winterizing them is quite simple, as these bushes require very little care. However, there is a certain time to prepare butterfly bushes for the winter.

Step 1: Avoid pruning butterfly bushes in the fall. Butterfly bushes tend to fare better when pruned in the spring, just before new growth starts. Leaving the dead twigs and

limbs on the butterfly bush in the winter helps the root ball store nutrients and protects it for the winter.

Step 2: Apply a heavy layer of mulch around the base of the bush before the first frost in the winter. This will hold warmth and moisture around the bush to protect the root ball from freezing temperatures. If you prefer, cover the bush with a cloth material but it is not necessary.

Step 3: Cut back the tops of limbs to remove all dead limbs and twigs

in the spring. Cut at a 45-degree angle just above the green part of the limb. New growth will start at this cut in the spring. This type of pruning will produce a bushier plant and much more blooms than the previous year.



Step 4: Transplant any butterfly bushes in the winter months when they are dormant if you need to plant them in a different location.

Step 5: Apply fertilizer in February before new growth starts with a fertilizer that is suitable for roses. Follow all application directions on the fertilizer.

Conservation to Education - Making the Local Connection

Saturday, September 17, 2011

9 am - 4:30 pm

**Free workshop for adults, Lunch available for \$10;
Register online or call (269) 381-1574 ext. 0 through
September 10.**

Join us as we welcome internationally recognized author, butterfly expert, and "Leave No Child Inside" advocate, **Robert Michael Pyle**. Don't miss this **FREE** workshop! We'll explore issues facing the restoration of local habitats and how to engage our children in the process.

Special Sunday Program

Spend a field day with Robert Michael Pyle! Sunday, September 18 from 10am-Noon. Fee: \$25 includes breakfast. Space is limited to 20;

**Register online or call (269) 381-1574 ext. 0 through
September 10.
to register for the Sunday program.**

Sponsored by the Kalamazoo Nature Center's Terry Todd International Speaker Series, Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones, and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of Chicago.

**Register online at www.NatureCenter.org or call
(269) 381-1574 ext. 0**

("Blue" Continued from page 4)

ture it that the leaves tend to drop early in the fall, but this may be avoided by cutting the dead stems as they die back. It is hardy in USDA zones 3 through 8. It is commonly employed as a border plant in gardens. While there are no commonly available cultivars, several hybrids involving *B. australis* have been created, such as *Baptisia* 'Purple Smoke', which is a cross with *Baptisia alba*. The variety *Baptisia australis* var. *minor* is also used occasionally in gardens. It is much shorter at only 30 to 60 cm (1 to 2 feet) in height, but the flowers are equal in size. Eating seeds may be toxic, especially in children.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

September

17th, Outing, 9am.—4:30pm., Kalamazoo Nature Center

“Conservations to Education -- Making Local Connections?”. Free conference with Robert Michael Pyle.

21st, Meeting, 7:00 pm., Nankin Mills
"Overwintering" with Brenda Dzedzic; SEMBA President; and Carolyn Sohoza; SEMBA Vice-President

Learn the Do's and Don'ts for overwintering your butterflies.

October

19th , Picnic, 6:00 pm., Nankin Mills
Join in on our 2nd Annual Picnic with food and fellowship.

19th, Meeting, 7:00 pm., Nankin Mills

"Seed Collecting, Saving, and Planting" with Brenda Dzedzic; SEMBA President
Brenda will show you how to collect, and take care of your seed for winter storage, and what to do when you go to plant them in the spring.

27th, Lecture, 7:30pm., Stamps Auditorium U-M

Dr. Douglas Tallamy of the University of Delaware talks about his book *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, which argues that by trading wild spaces for uncontrolled expansion and replacing native species with alien species, we've threatened the survival of wildlife.