

Wings Over Georgia

A Newsletter about Birds and Butterflies for the Members of
The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

Volume 1

September, 2007

Issue 1

Welcome to the first issue of *Wings Over Georgia*. It is this chairman's hope that this newsletter will provide some information that you may find interesting and educational. The plan is to have four issues a year - September, November, February, and May. Please feel free to contribute information to be included and/or to make suggestions.

Suzanne

Suzanne Wheeler

GCG Birds and Butterflies Chairman

2007 - 2009

wheeler@hartcom.net

Did you know?

Georgia



Brown Thrasher &

On April 6, 1935, the Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) was first chosen as the Georgia state bird by official proclamation of the governor. In 1970, at the request of The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., it was designated by the State Legislature as the official state bird. The Brown Thrasher is commonly found in the eastern section of the United States, ranging north to Canada and west to the Rockies.

Almost a foot in length, the Brown Thrasher has a long curved bill and a very long tail. It has two prominent white wing bars, a rich brown color on its topside, and a creamy white breast, heavily streaked with brown.



The Brown Thrasher builds bulky nests of loosely assembled twigs, bark strips, leaves and roots lined with hair and feathers in low trees, bushes, vines, stumps, brush heaps, and on the ground. It lays three to six, usually four or five white eggs, sometimes with a blue green tint. It chases cats and dogs in the vicinity of its nest. You may see it hopping along the ground, foraging for grasshoppers, crickets, spiders, beetles, ants, and other insects on the ground. It also eats a variety of fruit.



On April 4, 1988, the butterfly became an important part of Georgia history when the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail became an official state symbol.

Noted for their size and beauty, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails range throughout much of Canada and most of the United States, east of a line stretching roughly from Alaska to Eastern Texas. Their caterpillar host plants are mainly broadleaf trees and shrubs.

The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail is described as being one of Georgia's most colorful resident butterflies, and its maximum width of five inches makes it one of our largest. It's common name is suggested by its appearance of yellow wings striped with black and surrounded by black edges. They also have half-inch tails extending from each wing. They are usually seen in the woods and in open and sunny areas from spring to autumn, feeding on the nectar of flowers.

This large yellow, black striped beauty is one of the most familiar and wide spread butterflies in North America. It is believed to be the first North American insect to have been portrayed. A recognizable drawing was sent to England after Sir Walter Raleigh's third expedition to Virginia.

Female tiger swallowtails can also develop into black butterflies with blue markings, mimicking an unpalatable cousin, the pipevine swallowtail.

How to Create a Butterfly Garden

LOCATE THE GARDEN IN A SUNNY AREA. Butterflies and most butterfly attracting plants need bright sunlight.

PLANT NECTAR-PRODUCING FLOWERS THAT BUTTERFLIES PREFER. Flower preference is based on color and shape. Many butterflies prefer purple, yellow and orange blossoms. Plants which produce clusters of short, tubular flowers or flat-topped flowers are ideal. Plants such as butterfly bush, lantana, cosmos, purple coneflower, and verbena are excellent choices for a butterfly garden.

SELECT SINGLE FLOWERS RATHER THAN DOUBLE FLOWERS. The nectar of single flowers is more accessible and easier for butterflies to extract than the nectar of double flowers.

USE LARGE SPLASHES OF COLOR IN YOUR LANDSCAPE DESIGN. Butterflies are first attracted to flowers by their color. Groups of flowers are easier for butterflies to locate than isolated plants.

PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS BLOOM THROUGH THE GROWING SEASON. Butterflies are active from early spring until late fall. Plant a selection of flowers that will provide nectar throughout the entire growing season (spring - azaleas, summer - buddleia, fall - mums).

INCLUDE HOST PLANTS IN THE GARDEN DESIGN. Host plants provide food for caterpillars and lure female butterflies into the garden to lay eggs.

INCLUDE DAMP AREAS OR SHALLOW PUDDLES IN THE GARDEN. Some butterflies drink and extract salts from moist soil. Occasionally, large numbers of male butterflies congregate around a moist area to drink, forming a “puddle club.”

PLACE FLAT STONES IN THE GARDEN FOR BASKING. A butterfly often perches on a stone, bare soil, or vegetation to bask in the sun. Basking raises the butterfly’s body temperature so it is able to fly and remain active.



Bird Gardening

Bird gardening provides the joy and benefit of seeing the birds, teaches you about the native plants on your own property, expands your knowledge of birds' needs, and is active participation in conservation. It is positive action that individuals can do right away.

There are four main things that birds need - food water, nesting sites, and shelter. Nature is built upon a multitude of complex inter-dependencies. The more your yard can begin to reflect the variety of the natural world within a small area, the better it will support birds.

What is food to birds? Bird food includes two basic types - plants and animals.

As you look around your yard, try to think like a bird. If you were a chickadee that eats insects where would you go? If you were a quail that eats grains on the ground, would you have a place to feed? If you were a mockingbird that eats fruit, would you be able to find food all year? And if

you were a sparrow on migration, would you stop here to eat grass and weed seeds in the fall?

Birds need water for drinking and bathing. They need this water all twelve months.

Birds need places to build a nest and raise their young. Different species nest in different habitats. Therefore you need many diverse nesting opportunities to attract a large number of nesting birds.

Birds need shelter from rain, snow, sun wind, and predators. By providing a variety of shelters on your property, you'll attract more birds.

Bird feeders provide a variety of seeds that are essential to any bird garden. The feeder setup that will attract the most birds should provide the four basic foods - sunflower seeds, mixed seed, thistle seed, and suet.

Start feeding now and don't stop. The birds won't get too lazy or fat to fly and they won't suffer when you go away. They always supplement feeder food with food in the wild. If you have a responsible neighborhood child you might pay them to feed your birds while you're away if you're worried about the birds. Who knows, that may be the beginning of that child's interest in birds.

Enriching your own backyard is a small step that you can take to restore the American habitat, bring back the birds and other animals, and to add to the long-term health of the human race in its interdependence with all things.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT BUTTERFLIES

1. *Butterfly House* by Eve Bunting
2. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
3. *The Butterfly Alphabet Book* by Bryan Cassie and Jerry Pallotta
4. *Waiting For Wings* by Lois Ehlert
5. *Butterflies* by Gallimard Jeunsee and Claude Heliadore
6. *Caterpillar's Wish* by Mary Murphy
7. *Caterpillar to Butterfly* by Barbara Reid
8. *Monarch Butterfly of Aster Way* by Elizabeth Ring
9. *Bugs and Slugs* by Judy Tachell

I DON'T DO WINDOWS CAUSE I LOVE BIRDS AND I DON'T WANT ONE TO RUN INTO A CLEAN WINDOW AND GET HURT!