

Spicebush Swallowtail Butterflies

By Jeff Ormiston

While we were all concerned about the low numbers of Monarch Butterfly adults flying north from Mexico this spring, it was obvious that this would be a banner year for the various swallowtail butterflies native to our parks and natural areas. One of the most beautiful and interesting of these is the Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly, *Papilio troilus troilus*.



Early Spicebush instars form a shelter by laying a web mat near the edge of the host plant on which their egg was laid. As the webbing dries it contracts and pulls the leaf edge inward forming a tube that the caterpillar uses for its shelter. These host plants include Spice Bush, Sassafras, Tulip Tree and others. The caterpillar hides in the shelter during the day and crawls out to feed at night thus avoiding the common caterpillar predators.

As an early instar the caterpillar's main means of protection is its ability to look like a bird dropping. The brown 3rd instar caterpillar, with white markings, makes a very convincing specimen. The green 5th instar caterpillar uses its false eye spots and humped body to look like a green snake and discourages predators. The eyespots even come with false reflective eye highlights.

The actual head of the caterpillar is usually tucked under the anterior of the body for protection.

To further promote the charade the caterpillar has a forked osmeterium that, when fully extended, resembles the forked tongue of a snake. The osmeterium also has a foul smelling coating that discourages those that would make lunch out of the caterpillar.



As the caterpillar gets closer to forming a chrysalis it begins to change color to a light yellow. Finally it climbs a convenient stem, attaches a string seatbelt and waits for the pupating process to begin.



Spicebush chrysalises that form during the longer days of summer will be green to blend with the green summer leaves. Those chrysalises that form during the shorter days of late summer and fall will be brown to blend with the brown leaves of fall. These brown chrysalises will enter a state of diapause, or suspended development, and emerge when the warm winds begin the following spring. At Fox Island we are raising about 20 Spicebush Swallowtails as this article is being written.



Poke Sallet Anyone? By Carol Gaham

Most people hunt for mushrooms in the spring, but one of my earliest childhood memories was the annual hunt for poke. My dad would search for enough stands of poke just the right height to get a “good mess”. My mom would carefully wash and clean the young, tender shoots and then boil the greens. After boiling them she would roll the greens in a batter and then fry it. The house would fill with a distinctive aroma. It was an acquired taste for most, but a rite of spring for some.

It is comparable to spinach and asparagus and was much anticipated as one of the first greens of spring. The only issue is that it has to be picked before it gets too big. After it grows to the point the stems start turning purple, it is quite poisonous.

So nostalgic me was thrilled to find pokeweed growing on my little corner of the world. I decided to do a little bit of research and soon found a variety of names for the plant: Pokeweed, Pokeberry, poke root, inkberry, pukeberry, and just plain poke, to name a few.

Pokeweed grows up to 10 feet tall and is a spindly plant so it is a little unruly in the garden. Europeans love it and it is a favorite plant for gardeners. Poke reproduces from the seeds, and the clusters of berries the plant produces in the fall are a deep purple, and look a lot like miniature grape pods.

Pokeweed can bloom anytime from May to October. The plant is common throughout the eastern U.S. and southeastern Canada. It likes damp, rich soils in clearings, woodland margins and roadsides. The seeds are usually spread by birds who consume the berries.



Pokeweed is the host plant for the giant leopard moth, and hummingbirds love its white flowers. You may see brown thrashers, American crows, cardinals, starlings, cedar waxwings, mourning doves, catbirds, bluebirds, and red-bellied woodpeckers, along with the occasional fox, opossum, and raccoon eating the ripe berries. Poke berries are an important source of food in the winter.

Humans have found several uses for mature pokeweed. The berries make a rich crimson dye, but it fades quickly. Native Americans decorated their horses with it. It was also used as ink. It is rumored that the Declaration of Independence was written using ink made from pokeberry, but it was actually written using iron gall ink. Any historical document (especially Civil War era) that looks like it was written with brown ink was likely written using pokeberry ink.

The root contains a substance similar to saponin, which homemade soap makers are familiar with as the stuff that makes your soap lather. This is also what makes the plant poisonous.



Pokeweed also has medicinal value. The root, although the most toxic part of the plant, has anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-fungal, anti-cancer, expectorant, hypnotic, narcotic and purgative properties. It has been used to treat Rheumatoid arthritis, tonsillitis, mumps, glandular fever, colds, swollen lymph glands, constipation, and bronchitis. It can also be effective for fungal infections, joint inflammation, hemorrhoids, ulcers, and bad breath. The properties of freeze-dried pokeweed root have been studied and used to treat breast cancer, and is currently being researched as a possible treatment for HIV and Childhood Leukemia.

It is said that the berries are not toxic to humans as long as you don't crush the seeds when you eat them. It is also said that mountain folk make a wine (moonshine, y'all) from the berries and claim that it helps with arthritis symptoms. Dried pokeberries have been used to dissolve bone spurs and to control the pain of arthritis and rheumatism. Poke is so revered by people of the south that several communities still hold "Poke Sallet" festivals every year.

Pokeweed is not the most attractive plant in the garden, but it is important to wildlife. So, if it pops up in your yard in an inconspicuous place, let it grow for the birds and furry creatures. They'll love you for it in the winter. I think I'd leave the medicinal uses to the experienced herbalists and naturopathic physicians, but that tasty dish that Tony Joe White sings about in his song, "Poke Salad Annie"...it's a real thing. Chomp. Chomp.

Birds Have No Morals

By Ed Powers

Humans should not look to birds as a model for behavior.

Male hummingbirds vigorously court females, have a quick affair, then disappear, to look for another encounter elsewhere.

Wilson's Phalaropes reverse the behavior. Unlike most birds where the sexes differ in appearance, in phalaropes the female is the more colorful. For these birds, after mating the female will lay a clutch of eggs and then desert the male, leaving him to raise the young ones. She will then go off to court other males.

Smith's Longspur is a sparrow-like bird that migrates through western Indiana. They breed in the far northern Canada and Alaska. During a one-week period, female Smith's Longspurs will copulate more than 350 times with as many as three males. Not to be outdone, the males will copulate with up to three different females.

Many shorebirds go north to their nesting grounds, raise their children, and then, before the chicks are even able to fly, abandon them and head back to their winter homes. Somehow, the first-year birds find their way to the winter territory, but likely never see their parents again.

Some birds, like the familiar Red-winged Blackbird, commit polygamy. Each male may have as many as 15 females in his territory, and father breeds with most of them.

Most of our birds seem to have a more acceptable behavior. Both sexes share incubation of eggs and brooding of nestlings. In others, the female does all this, but the male brings food to her, just like in the fifties sitcom, "Father Knows Best." And both will bring food to the nestlings, and continue to watch over them as they fledge. But all is not as it seems. DNA testing has shown that not all the babies in a nest have the same father. There is obviously some adultery going on.



They will form a pair bond. In some cases, the male brings food to her, just like in the fifties sitcom, "Father Knows Best." And both will bring food to the nestlings, and continue to watch over them as they fledge. But all is not as it seems. DNA testing has shown that not all the babies in a nest have the same father. There is obviously some

Raptors kill and eat other animals. We might give them a pass on this – humans do the same thing, although most of us kill by proxy.

them a pass on this – humans do the same thing,

I don't mean to say birds are immoral. Human morality is a human invention, and in fact differs in some respects from culture to culture. Birds are driven mostly by two imperatives: survival and reproduction. If they could form a moral code it is this: anything that promotes survival and reproduction is moral.

Speaking of birds: you might enjoy the Big Sit

By Cynthia Powers

Billed as "birding's most sedentary event" it will take place on October 9, a Sunday afternoon on the back deck of the Fox Island Nature Center. Just come whenever you can; we'll sit in the fall sunshine, and let the birds come to us! Usually we can spot over 30 species from that comfortable location, overlooking the pond, woods, and open sky. Refreshments will no doubt be furnished by Stockbridge Audubon Society, and park admission is the only charge.



It's a privilege to live in Indiana!

News from Renee Benz at Moser Park in New Haven

Many know me as the muralist at Metea, or the outdoor educator at Camp Potawotami. Now I am the Nature Programs Director as Moser Park in New Haven, having taken over Heather Baker's position as programs director this spring. This park is located on 601 West Main Street in New Haven, Indiana. When I arrived, the nature center was recently repainted, but many of the supplies and educational items were lost due to last spring's flood in 2015.



Moser Park Nature Center Flood Photo in 2015.



That was a frustrating year for everyone in the New Haven area. The day camp had to be relocated, many wonderful programs were cancelled, and the nature center was closed for clean up and repairs. So, it was a huge surprise for the community to see the building up and running again this year!

New visitors, new adventures, and new friends!

One of the many jobs that I do is run free programs for Pre-K to 5th graders on the weekends and classroom visits.



Owl Pellet Dissection at Teaching Tree.



Amy Simpson clearing trails at Moser Park.

One of my other responsibilities is trail maintenance at Deetz Nature Preserve and Moser Park. That involves removing invasive plants like Japanese knot weed. I am very fortunate to have hired one of my old AmeriCorps co-workers, Amy Simpson. Her experience with property maintenance from working at the Red River Gorge in Kentucky has helped immensely!

However, we are only two people and need a lot of help! We are always looking for nature loving folks like Brett Fisher to help with invasive species removal and trail maintenance. Those interested can contact me at rbentz@newhavenin.org. I am happy to discuss current and future projects with anyone who is interested.

Any Master Naturalists who need volunteer hours? Here's your chance!



Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids



By Pam George

Where Have All the Pollinators Gone?

The golds and purples of autumn are starting to fade as winter creeps into this region of the country. As the flowers wither and dry up, food becomes scarce for a wide variety of critters who serve as pollinators for about 80% of the flowers in the meadows at Fox Island Park.

Just who are some of these pollinators and where do they go in winter?

The vast majority of pollinators are members of the bee family. We are most familiar with honeybees. Honeybees prepare for winter by heading to their hives when temperatures drop into the 50s. As the weather becomes cool, the honeybees gather in a central area of the hive and form a “winter cluster.”

Worker honeybees have only one job in the winter — to keep the queen bee safe and warm. The worker bees do this by surrounding the queen, fluttering their wings and shivering, thus keeping the hive warm. The worker bees only live for a few weeks, but are able to keep the queen bee alive all winter long.

Did you know that honeybees are not native to North America? They were brought over by the settlers to be their personal supply of honey. The bees later escaped into the wild and the rest is history! Honeybees, however, are not good at pollinating many plants in your garden, like tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, and blueberries. Therefore, many flowering plants depend on our **native bees** to complete their cycles from seed to plant to flower to seed again.

Almost all native bees are **solitary**, meaning individual nests for laying their eggs. They into pollen balls for their young to eat when this mixture to prevent the growth of bacteria



they don't build hive colonies, but do build mix dry pollen with some nectar and knead it they hatch out. They add their own saliva to and fungi.

Who are these native, **solitary** bees and where are their nests?

Mason bees use hollow stems such as reeds, or holes in trees usually left by insects or woodpeckers to make their nests. A female, after mating with a male, deposits one egg in each cell along with a pollen ball, then uses mud to construct walls between adjoining cells and a thicker plug to seal the nest entrance from parasites. After making her nests, her life cycle is complete.

Carpenter bees use their powerful jaws to make holes in wood. They then create “particle board” spiral partitions between each cell. Again, this completes their life cycle.

Miner bees build their nests in tunnels and underground burrows. They choose bare, sunny spots that won't wash away during rainstorms and start digging, which may take several days. They excavate a long tunnel slightly wider than their own bodies. At the end of the tunnel, the female bee builds a chamber (called a **brood cell**) a little wider than the tunnel. The brood cell is filled with enough pollen and nectar for just one bee to grow from egg to adult. She then lays an egg and seals the chamber. A tunnel can have several branches with one stocked brood cell at the end of each.



So, “bee” on the lookout for emerging native bees next spring as they start the cycle of adult to egg to larva to pupa to adult again next summer.

I wish I'd known About That!

Allen County Parks publishes "THE WILD GRAPEVINE" quarterly. This publication goes out to all AC Parks annual members and is accessible through the Allen County Parks website. Other internet sites related to Allen County Parks events:

On FACEBOOK search: Allen County Parks, Fox Island Park, Fox Island Alliance

On the Internet search www.allencountyparks.org.

Fox Island has lots of programs for all ages.

Most require pre-registration and a small fee.

Natalie's preschool programs: Oct. 4, Bats and Spiders; Nov 1, Seeds; Dec 13, Christmas Nature Crafts. These are on Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m. and cost \$3. Call to preregister, 446-3246.

Jeff's Fall programs are on Sunday afternoons, and are free with park admission:

October 16, 1:30 to 3p.m.: Raising Milkweeds for Monarchs

October 23, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.: Run, Forest, Run! Hike on the tree trail.

November 13, 1:30 to 3 p.m.: Feeding Winter Birds. Held in the Vera Dulin Building.

December 4, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.: Winter Animal Habits

Natalie's popular Scrapbooking Nights will be October 21 and November 18, 6 p.m. till midnight. Call her for details 446-3246 and to preregister. Sometimes they order pizza!

Some of you know that Natalie has declared WAR on invasive honeysuckle. At Fox Island, Honeysuckle Daze will be Oct. 25 and 26, from 10 to 4. If you work all day you get a free park pass! Call 446-3246 to preregister and plan to bring your own equipment.



Calling all nature writers: you don't have to be a board member to write articles for the Fox Tale. If you have a favorite topic, research it and send it to the editor, Cynthia Powers, at zzedpowers@aol.com. The deadlines are easy to remember: the first day of a new season is the deadline for that season's newsletter.

Pictures are welcome too; or how about poetry?



Fox Island Alliance

Ed Powers
12206 W. Yoder Road
Roanoke, IN 46783

Officers:

Brett Fisher, President

Kate Sanders, Vice President

Jeff Ormiston, Vice President

Carol Gaham, Secretary

Nathan Arata, Treasurer

Board of Directors:

Barbara Bauer, Nathan Arata, Renee Bentz , Liz Hincks, Dr. Solomon Isiorho, Jeff Keplar, Ed Powers, Kevin Boner, Kate Sanders, Pam George, Raquel Rodriguez

Directors Emeritus:

Phil Herrick, Kate Ferguson, Iona Mensch, and John McCory

Fox Tale Editor:

Cynthia Powers

The **Fox Island Alliance** is a volunteer not-for-profit organization. Its purposes are to help preserve the natural features of Fox Island County Park, to assist its orderly development as a nature preserve, to raise funds to facilitate its development, to promote Fox Island's use as an educational center, and to coordinate volunteer efforts.

MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE ON MARCH 31.

CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL TO BE SURE.

Use the application to the right and check "Renewal"

Fox Island Alliance Membership Application __New__Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Check if you would like to receive your Fox Tale by email

Check if you do not want your name published

Please Circle One:

Students \$5 - Senior \$5 - 2 Seniors \$10 - Indiv. \$15 - Family \$20

Sustaining \$30 - Patron \$50

Additional gift \$ __ Education \$ __ Exhibits \$ __ Scholarship

\$ __ Preservation

Total Dues and Gifts \$ __

If this membership is a gift, enter donor's name:

Check if you are interested in volunteering. You will be contacted.

Will your employer match your gift to FIA?

Check with your Human Resources/Personnel Department.

FIA is a 501 (c) (3) organization; extra gifts are tax deductible.

Make your check payable to FIA, Inc. and mail with this form to:

Ed Powers, Membership 12206 W. Yoder Rd., Roanoke, IN 46783

We're on the Web!

www.foxislandalliance.org