

Please send reports with photos to
 pam@conservingcarolina.org

Thanks to David Campbell for identifying
 Polk County's 'Most Wanted'

ZHEE ZIZIZI zzzzzet.
 ending with a high buzz-like trill, ZHEE
 series of rising and accelerating notes,
 buzz-like on one pitch, followed by a short
 June. The song of the male is rapid and
 in the canopy, from late April through mid-
 tracts of mature oak-hickory forests, high
 for them on ridges and slopes with large
 white wing bars and white tail spots. Look
 have no "necklace". Both sexes have 2
 white or yellowish eyebrow stripe; they
 green above with white under parts and a
 neck. Females are bluish-green to olive-
 black line, or "necklace", across their
 streaks on their back and sides and a
 and white below. They have black
 Males are blue above
 under tail coverts.
 a short tail, and long
 with long pointed wings,
 They are 4-5" in length,
 early spring migrants.
 Cerulean Warblers are
 (Setophaga cerulea)



Cerulean Warbler

Polk County's Most Wanted Animals & Habitats



Spotlighting Species of Interest in Polk County, NC

For more information, visit the Conserving Carolina
 website at www.conservingcarolina.org/polk-countys-most-wanted-plants-animals



2060 Lynn Road, Suite 1
 Columbus, NC 28722

(828) 859-5060
info@conservingcarolina.org

(Setophaga cerulea)
 Cerulean Warblers are
 early spring migrants.
 They are 4-5" in length,
 with long pointed wings,
 a short tail, and long
 under tail coverts.
 Males are blue above
 and white below. They have black
 streaks on their back and sides and a
 black line, or "necklace", across their
 neck. Females are bluish-green to olive-
 green above with white under parts and a
 white or yellowish eyebrow stripe; they
 have no "necklace". Both sexes have 2
 from plants including
 common and swamp
 milkweeds, ironweed,
 red clover and butter-
 flybush. Females walk
 along the ground lay-
 ing single eggs on
 dead twigs and leaves near violets.



Yucca Giant-Skipper

(Megathymus yuccae)
 The butterfly pro-
 duces one generation
 each year, laying
 large, amber-brown
 eggs singly on Yucca
 leaves from Feb. to
 May. After hatching,
 young larvae feed on host leaves. As they
 mature, older larvae bore into the plant crown
 and feed within the root, constructing a prom-
 ment silken tent or chimney at the opening of



Diana Fritillary

(Speyeria diana)
 Ranked as "very rare"
 globally, this impres-
 sive, large forest dwell-
 ing butterfly can be
 found from mid-May to
 early Oct. Female
 wings are 3-4". Upper
 portions of the wings are black with blue on
 outer portion. Males are a little smaller, with
 orange on the outer wing portion and mostly
 orange on the underside. Adults feed on
 dung and flower nectar.



Female

Male



Male

dead twigs and leaves near violets.

(Megathymus yuccae)
 The butterfly pro-
 duces one generation
 each year, laying
 large, amber-brown
 eggs singly on Yucca
 leaves from Feb. to
 May. After hatching,
 young larvae feed on host leaves. As they
 mature, older larvae bore into the plant crown
 and feed within the root, constructing a prom-
 ment silken tent or chimney at the opening of

Yucca Giant-Skipper
 (Megathymus yuccae)
 The butterfly pro-
 duces one generation
 each year, laying
 large, amber-brown
 eggs singly on Yucca
 leaves from Feb. to
 May. After hatching,
 young larvae feed on host leaves. As they
 mature, older larvae bore into the plant crown
 and feed within the root, constructing a prom-
 ment silken tent or chimney at the opening of



Eastern Spotted Skunk

(Spilogal putorius)
 Smaller than the
 more common East-
 ern Striped Skunk,
 the Eastern Spotted

Skunk has a 10-27" (with tail) weasel-like
 body and weighs 1-4 #s. The dark black coat
 has 4-6 broken white stripes that look like
 spots. They usually have a white tip on their
 tail and a white, inverted triangle-shaped
 patch on their forehead.



Giant Stag Beetle

(Lucanus elaphus)
 The males are much
 larger than females
 and possess large
 mandibles for use in
 battling other males
 for mates. Males may

reach 60 mm in length, with mandibles;
 females 30-35 mm. This species requires
 large rotting deciduous trees and stumps
 within which to complete its life cycle.



Bog Turtle

(Glyptemys muhlenbergi)
 The smallest turtle
 in the US, 3-4".
 They inhabit wet
 areas with emergent

vegetation, preferring cool, clear, shallow,
 slow-moving, muddy bottomed
 streams. Look for a bright orange to yellow
 blotch on either side of the head and neck.

Green Salamander

(Aneides aeneus)
 For most of the year,
 Green Salamanders
 can be found in the
 crevices of rock
 shaded by rhodo-
 dendron in moist forests. They have a black,
 dark brown or gray body with a green to
 yellowish-green lichen-like pattern on the
 head, back, and tail.



Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are seasonal
 and temporary, typically
 occurring within the lower
 areas of mixed hardwood
 forests. Because of their
 temporary nature, vernal
 pools are not inhabited by
 fish, which is why these small water bodies
 are important breeding sites for many
 species of amphibians, notably
 salamanders.



Scarlet Kingsnake



(Lampropeltis triangulum elapsoides)
 Kingsnakes are
 known for their
 vivid coloration
 of red, black, yellow or white bands that
 encircle its body. This non-venomous
 snake is similar to the venomous Coral
 Snake known from southeastern NC.
 Kingsnakes red bands touch the black
 bands where Coral Snakes red bands
 touch yellow bands. Kingsnakes are small,
 slender snakes, ~18". They are often
 found beneath the peeling bark of Pine
 stumps or logs.



Northern Pine Snake

(Pituophis melanoleucus melanoleucus)
 One of the largest snakes in NC, 4-6' long,
 these non-venomous snakes are bulky in
 appearance, with
 whitish-gray
 background
 and black or
 brown
 blotches.
 Usually ac-
 tive in the
 morning or late afternoon.

are red, yellow, and blue.
rounded projections on the surface) that prominent prickly tubercles (small several inches long, and light green with spectacular bands in its own right), is parks, and backyards. The caterpillar (a include forests, woodland edges, city gray, pink, and black. Preferred habitats and a coloration consisting of red, white, hash a wingspan in excess of 5.5 inches, America, Cecropia



Cecropia Moth
(*Hyalophora cecropia*)
One of the largest silk moth species in North America, Cecropia

family Plethodontidae, the Yonahlossee is lungless salamander belonging to the Yonahlossee (Plethodon yonahlossee) family. Coloration is distinctive, with a dark background coloration for most of the body, and a prominent and large reddish 'saddle' over the middle portion of the back. Juveniles will sport red spots or blotches on their back and these will fuse in adulthood to form a large 'saddle'. Females are usually larger than males.



Yonahlossee Salamander
(*Plethodon yonahlossee*)

Belonging to the

These small butterflies range in size from 7/8" - 1 1/4". Also fairly subtle in coloration, they display a range of shades of brown to gray. They are active in the early spring, usually on the wing as early as February or March.



Elfin Butterflies
(*Callophrys*)

Tree holes, sometimes referred to by the less appetizing name of rot holes, are often encountered on large, frequently on deciduous trees, tree holes may also be found on coniferous trees. Many tree holes contain water, rotting leaves, and other organic debris which provide nutrients for an entire community of microbes, fungi, and invertebrates. The biodiversity contained within a single, large, water-filled tree hole can be immense.



Tree Holes



Timber Rattlesnake
(*Crotalus horridus*)
A medium to large-sized snake, occasionally over 5' in length (usually around 3 1/2' to 4'), the Timber Rattlesnake can be

quite variable in appearance. Some have a light background with slightly darker mottling/chevrons. Darker colored ones are more abundant in mountains. The camouflage is superb, and serves them well in their role as ambush predators. Their diet consists largely of rodents. As with other members of its genus, these snakes will utilize the rattles on their tails to warn you of their presence if you should approach too closely.

American Burying Beetle
(*Nicrophorus americanus*)
The American Burying Beetle is large, attaining a length of over 1.5 inches.



The coloration of this (and most other members of the genus) is a black body with various red or orange markings upon the head and thorax. Unlike other closely related species in our area, the American Burying Beetle has an orange/red thorax that is distinctive. This particular species is also nocturnal, often recorded as being attracted to artificial lights, a trait that may have led to its current scarcity.

Slender Glass Lizard

(*Ophisaurus attenuatus*)
Glass Lizards are so-named because they readily lose or 'drop' their tails in order to avoid capture. They are able to regenerate the lost tails, which they're never as perfect in appearance as the initial tail. Since they lack legs, they are often mistaken for snakes – even though their head is not distinctly 'set off' from the main body. Also, unlike snakes, Glass Lizards have ears – small openings in the side of their head. They are usually brown or light yellowish brown in overall coloration, with darker bands being prominently displayed over their backs and tails. Overall lengths vary from 2' to 3 1/2' in length. Their scales are smooth and give a somewhat glossy appearance.



Barn Owl
(*Tyto alba*)
The Barn Owl, a ghostly nocturnal denizen of our fields and farmlands, is a distinctive species, buff in coloration with a slightly darker back. They have a

white, heart-shaped face and stand approximately 1 1/2' in height. In flight, it often looks entirely white. Its preferred prey includes mice, voles, and other rodents.

Checkerspot has a wingspan of approximately 2.5 - 3 inches. Preferred habitats are wetlands and bogs, where the primary larval food plants, Turtleghead plants of the genus Chelone, are found. However, one may occasionally encounter this butterfly in upland habitats with no Turtleghead plants at all.



Baltimore Checkerspot
(*Euphydryas phaeton*)
Beautifully arrayed in patterns of orange, black, and white, the Baltimore

Hilltopping is a mate-seeking behavior employed by many groups of insects such as butterflies, dragonflies, beetles, and flies. Simply put, insects will seek out the highest points in the landscape and congregate there to seek mates. Butterflies, like the pictured Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antopa*) and Angletwings (*Polytonia* spp.) are often the most visible members of the "hilltopping community" in our region, but they are by no means the most numerous.



Hilltopping
With the arrival of spring, be on the lookout for an interesting insect behavior known as "Hilltopping."



Rusty-patched Bumblebee
(*Bombus affinis*)
The aptly-named Rusty-patched Bumblebee bears an orange colored spot

on its abdomen that serves to distinguish it from other species of Bumblebees. Collection records indicate that this species has been found in North Carolina, and may very well still be present here. Open, sunny areas that contain an abundance of wildflowers serve as an excellent place to search for this, and other, species of Bumblebees.

Red-legged Purseweb Spider

(*Sphodros rufipes*)
A close relative of the Tarantula, the Red-legged Purseweb Spider is only red-legged if it's a male; females are all black. Both sexes are approximately 1" long. Instead of a 'web', they make silken tubes running up the lower bases of tree trunks, rocks, etc. The tubes become camouflaged over time, as bits of twigs, algae, etc. become incorporated. The spider hides inside, and if an unfortunate insect walks across, the spider pierces it from within the lair with fangs, and pulls it inside for slow digestion.



Adult Sugar Maple Borers are large and robust and mimic Yellow Jackets. The adult is about 1 inch long, black, and has yellow markings. This insect is best recognized by the damage the larvae cause to Sugar Maple trees and this can be observed year-round. Evidence of larval activity can be seen as horizontal scars formed on the trunk of the tree and these scars may persist for many years.

Sugar Maple Borer
(*Glycobius speciosus*)



Goldenrod flowers.

observed feeding and mating on the prefer sunny, warm days and may be Black Locust - that is ideal. The beetles patch of Goldenrod adjacent to a stand of adults feed on pollen. If one can locate a beetles is to seek out Goldenrods, where the method to employ when searching for adult beetles to avoid predation by birds. The best (known as Batesian mimicry) helps the as Yellow Jackets - this form of mimicry stingling wasps, such

Locust Borer
(*Megacyllene robiniae*)

The Locust Borer bears a striking resemblance to stingling wasps, such



Sap Runs

Sap runs are a fascinating micro-habitat that occur on trees where an injury has resulted from some type of physical damage. Sap flowing from the tree

wound (known as flux) contains sugar which provides food for bacteria and other types of microorganisms. In turn, these microorganisms provide nourishment for the larvae of some of our most spectacular Hoverflies, incredible mimics of stinging wasps and bees such as the pictured Syrphid Fly.



Spotted Salamander
(*Ambystoma maculatum*)

A stout species reaching up to nine inches in length with a black body

covered in bright yellow "polka dots," the Spotted Salamander is impossible to confuse with any other species throughout its range. Their diet consists of insects and other invertebrates. They are rarely encountered outside of their breeding season of late winter to very early spring, dwelling as they do in underground burrows.



months. areas throughout the spring and summer vegetation in old fields or lightly wooded attracted to lights or seen flying among have very long antennae. They are often Owtflies look like dragonflies except they edges from mid-spring to late summer. in old fields, gardens, and woodland stingling wasps. They are found on flowers In our region, one species mimics the Mantidflies have strong raptorial "claws." their wings.

"Nerve-wings" due to veined structures on insects are commonly referred to as as include Mantidflies and Owtflies. These fauna, Neuroptera ("Nerve-wings") which Try to find this interesting order of insect

Insect Order Neuroptera



Owtfly



Mantidfly



Eastern Woodrat
(*Neotoma floridana haematorea*)

Woodrat nests are built inside a large "house" constructed of sticks, leaves, branches, and

scavenged litter, hence the nickname "packrats." The nest structures are often located in or under rock outcroppings, in large cavity trees, in large slash piles, or in abandoned buildings. They have gray-brown or rusty brown fur on the back, a white belly, and white paws.

Black Trumpet Mushroom

(*Craterellus fallax*)

These hard-to-spot mushrooms are dark in coloration with a tube-like appearance that is very reminiscent of a trumpet. The 'trumpets' are usually from one to two and a half inches in length with a grayish-black coloration. The spore print is yellowish to orange. As for habitat, Black Trumpet prefers growing under Oak and Beech trees, often in a carpet of moss.



Giant Swallowtail
(*Papilio cresphontes*)

This largest species of Butterfly in North America is colored

dark, chocolate brown, with prominent areas of yellow on its wings and body and with a wingspan of up to a whopping 6 inches. Within North Carolina, caterpillars may be found on Hoptree in the Piedmont and mountains.

Snail-Eating Ground Beetles

(*Scaphinotus*)

These beetles, not surprisingly, prefer cool, damp conditions often near streams or on steep slopes above streams or creeks. Scaphinotus are secretive and typically nocturnal so they are not often observed. Purposeful searches for these beetles may be made by looking under rocks and logs in damp ravines that are favored by snails, particularly at night. Oddly enough, specimens may sometimes be caught by setting out bait of slightly fermented bananas (with a bit of yeast or beer added).



Mourning Cloak (Nymphalis antiopa), Monarch (Danaus plexippus), Eastern Comma (Polyommatus comma)

Mourning Cloak (Nymphalis antiopa)

This family of butterflies gets its name from the fact that its front legs are shorter than the other four legs, and these front legs don't have feet, just little brushes of hairs that the butterflies can use to smell and taste with. In Polk County, commonly encountered species include the Mourning Cloak, Comma, and Question Mark butterflies. Look for these butterflies along old dirt roads, woodland paths, and semi-open areas receiving sun for part of