

Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count 2025

By Adrienne Frank



Hummingbird Clearwing. Photo by Deborah Humphries.



Monarch Caterpillar. Photo by Deborah Humphries.

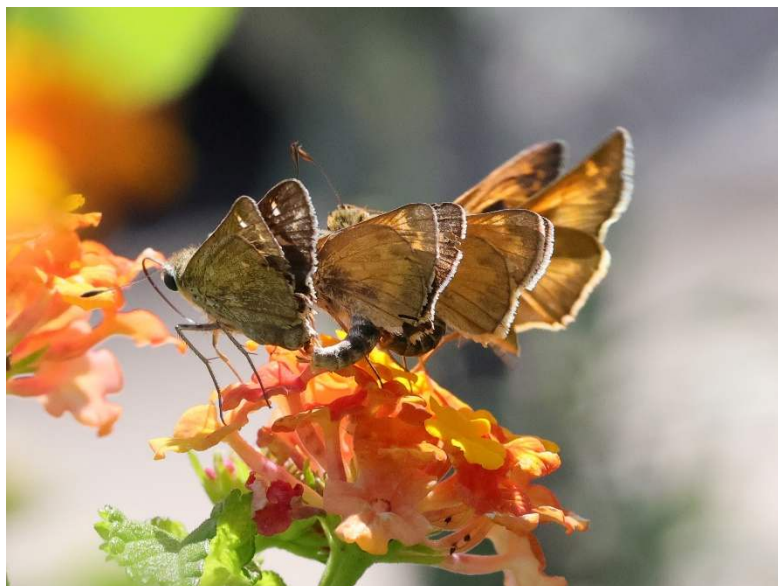
The 12th Annual Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count on August 9, 2025, was very good. We had more species of butterflies than last year, and we had three butterflies that had not been present for this count in the past. The weather was perfect, sunny and mid-80s for most of the day. Hearty observers started at about 9 a.m. and a few remained counting until 5:30 p.m. There were small groups that ventured out into eight sectors within the 15-mile-diameter circle. We had 54 observers.

Fifty butterfly species were identified, and 1,733 individuals were counted. I am happy to say that this year, the species count was higher than in the last three years. Since our first count in 2014, we have had a high of 53 and a low of 46 species.

This count was high in species but low in individuals. Some sectors did well while other areas had fewer butterflies than in the past. There were 19 of the 50 with only a few individuals.

New Species | Little Yellow, Great Purple Hairstreak and Little Wood Satyr. These never-before-reported butterflies were found in three different sectors during our counts.

Single Counts | There were a few species only seen once for this count: a Clouded Sulphur, Viceroy, Hackberry Emperor and a Crossline Skipper.



Sachem Skippers from the Williamsburg count. Photo by Deborah Humphries.

Missed Species | One species that we have had almost every other year but missed this year was the Cloudless Sulphur. Last year, we saw 74 of them.

Highest Species Count | The most observed species was the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (415 individuals). We had a new high count for Zebra Swallowtails (71). The previous high count was 52.

Lowest Count | The lowest ever count was for Black Swallowtails (7) and American Lady (3). We have had many others in previous years.

Caterpillars | In addition to adult butterflies, we had reports of 30 Sleepy Orange caterpillars feeding on senna plants and a few Monarch caterpillars on milkweed.

Each of the eight sectors reported varied sightings. Below are the highlights:

The **Gloucester sector**, in its sixth year, had 11 observers. Three Commas were observed in this sector, and no other Anglewings were seen. This is a high count for Eastern Commas.

Williamsburg City had eight people observing the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg and a few other spots around town. The team had the highest number of individual butterflies for Fiery Skippers (78), Silver Spotted Skippers (72), Huron Sachem (38), Horace's Duskywing (27) and Cabbage White (6).

The **William and Mary Campus** had one person observing, and she had a new species for the count: a Great Purple Hairstreak. Quite a fabulous find!

The **Lower York Sector** surveyed New Quarter Park plus other nearby locations and had seven observers. New Quarter Park's woods and proximity to Queen's Creek yielded some marsh butterflies not seen in other sectors: Delaware Skipper (5), Salt Marsh Skipper (2) and Aaron's (2). They observed one new species for the count: a Little Yellow.



Volunteers from the Centerville Sector at Matoaka Elementary School. Deborah Humphries, Don Brunk and Laurie Brunk.

The **Upper York County** team covered York River State Park and had five observers. They had Little Wood Satyr (2), which has not been recorded in August in our region.

They had the only Viceroy and Clouded Sulphur in any sector. They had the highest number of Orange Sulphur, Broad-winged Skipper and Clouded Skipper.

Freedom Park and the Warhill Tract had a team of seven, with a new local guide and four participants

who had never participated in our WABC prior to this one. They observed the most Monarchs and Dun Skippers.

The Centerville Corridor was a seven-member team, four of whom were new to the count, had the highest numbers of Zebra Swallowtails (25), Sleepy Orange (55) and Eastern Tailed Blue (15). They visited the Lavender Farm, Colonial Heritage and other spots along the corridor.



Volunteers from the Upper JCC Sector, with everyone looking excited and ready to go! Pictured are Emilia Godwin, Gary Driscole, Mac Mestayer, Kathi Mestayer, Brad Glasebrook, Tory Gussman and Adrienne Frank.

Upper James City County sector had a number of private gardens and eight observers. This sector had the highest number of Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (118), Pearl Crescent (16), Common Buckeye (26) and Carolina Satyr (20). They were very pleased to see the only Crossline and Northern Broken-dash skippers of the count.

Many thanks again to Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and the Historic Rivers Chapter VMN for covering the \$3 fee for each of our observers. Many thanks go out to our state and local parks, counties, businesses and private owners who helped to make the count a success. Thank you to

those who have joined in, making great observations and taking lots of photographs. What a team! **Please SAVE THE DATE for next year's count, taking place on Saturday, August 8, 2026.**