

Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count 2024

By Adrienne Frank



Volunteers during the Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count discussing an ID at the Blayton Garden.

Fifty-seven hearty observers braved the heat and humidity for this 11th annual Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count on August 3, 2024. The weather was great for the butterflies. At 9 a.m., it was about 80 degrees and cloudy. As the temperature rose into the nineties, the butterflies came out. This butterfly count is conducted under the protocols and procedures of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA).

This was the highest number of participants in 11 years of this count with 57 total observers. Small groups ventured out into seven sectors within the 15-mile diameter circle. Observers

identified 48 butterfly species and 2,264 individuals. This year had a higher species count than the past two years. In addition to adult butterflies, we had reports of caterpillars including Brazilian, Viceroy, Monarch and Black Swallowtail.

This year, the most observed species included 394 Eastern Tiger Swallowtails. We had new high counts for quite a few species: Spicebush Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Cloudless Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, Red-spotted Purple, Silver-spotted Skipper, Horace's Duskywing and Fiery Skipper. There were some single sightings (only one seen in the whole count): a Northern Cloudywing, Eastern Comma, Northern Pearl-eye, Common Sootywing, Broadwing Skipper, and Crossline Skipper. There were a few species that we have had in years past but missed this year including Hackberry and Tawny Emperor and several skippers (e.g., Swarthy, Tawny-edged).

Each of the seven sectors reported varied species. Here are some highlights:

- **The Gloucester** sector, in its fifth year, had 10 observers. They had two fewer species than last year but more individual butterflies. In comparison to other sectors, their great finds were 4 Appalachian Brown and a Crossline Skipper (only a few sightings since 2014).
- **Williamsburg City** had 12 people observing the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg and several other spots around town. The team had the highest number of individual butterflies for Fiery Skipper (154) and Silver Spotted Skippers (109). A highlight was finding a Viceroy caterpillar. One team member surveyed the William & Mary campus and saw the only Common Sootywing for the count.
- **The Lower York** sector surveyed New Quarter Park plus other nearby locations and had 9 observers. New Quarter Park's woods and proximity to Queen's Creek yields some marsh butterflies not often seen in other sectors (e.g., 6 Salt Marsh Skippers).

The Northern Pearly-eye and Broadwing Skipper were only observed in this park. They also discovered a Brazilian Skipper caterpillar.

- **Upper York County** team covered York River State Park and surrounding areas and had 8 observers. They had the high numbers for both the Eastern Tiger and Spicebush Swallowtails, Cloudless Sulphurs, American Ladies, and Ocola Skippers. Carolina Satyr was only recorded here.
- **Freedom Park and the Warhill Tract** had a team of 7. They found 6 Black Swallowtail caterpillars, 6 adult Monarchs, 23 Sachem, and one of the Appalachian Brown. Plus, many other species found by our sectors.
- **The Centerville Corridor** had the highest numbers of Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (104), high numbers of Sleepy Orange (48 – this was 13 individuals greater the last high number), Eastern Tailed Blue (14), and Little Glassywing (7). The seven-member team visited the Lavender Farm, Colonial Heritage, and other spots along the corridor.
- **The Upper James City County** sector had several private gardens and six observers. The two highlights were a Comma and a Northern Cloudywing. Both have only been seen a couple of times over the years. A Southern Broken-dash was observed here and in Gloucester.

Many thanks again to Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and the Historic Rivers Chapter VMN for covering the \$3 fee for each of the 57 observers. Many thanks go out to our state and local parks, counties, businesses and private owners who helped make the count a success. Save the date for August 9, 2025.



Volunteers from the 2024 Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count in the Jolly Pond sector.