



# Fourth of July Butterfly Counts

## Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary



Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary (KPS) northwest of Okeechobee is 84 square miles of dry prairie interspersed with marshes, cabbage palm and oak hammocks, wet prairie sloughs, and riverine habitat. When this count started,

Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park (KPPSP) was just a gleam in the state park system's eye so the count maintains its original name – KPS – and the majority of the count takes place inside KPPSP. [Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park](#)

Last year was a poor year for butterflies statewide and our counts reflected it. This year was different. Several of our counts had record high numbers of individuals. Checkered White and Great Southern White had a very good summer. We hit a bonanza of thirty-two White M Hairstreaks at Colt Creek State Park. Until this year our total since 2007 when the count began was 3. That almost made up for both teams getting stuck! White M made an even better showing at Lake Louisa State Park with 36 recorded. Zebra Heliconian has made a huge comeback at this park since the devastating freezes. This year we recorded 217 after finding zero in 2010. Our only count that records Polydamas Swallowtail is the Okeechobee count that includes Arnold's Butterfly Haven. Thirty-two were found this year. This count was cut short also with very heavy rain. Overall, grass skippers were in short supply this count season.



The park swamp buggy was the first order of business for the team covering the original Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary property, now part of the state park. It was very wet. This count was cut short because of heavy rains in the early afternoon. The river team had a few dicey moments due to high water but managed not to get the park truck stuck. Overall, swallowtail and sulphur numbers were low. Zebra Heliconian numbers are on a slow rise after the devastating freezes in 2009-10. The 12 recorded may have been low due to areas missed because of the rain. In fact the low numbers may reflect the small area we actually covered because of the weather.

One of the skipper highlights was Neamathla Skipper found and photographed. This skipper is never expected on a count as it is both uncommon and difficult to identify but the photo pinned it down. Aaron's Skipper loves wet conditions and a good number of them were found though they are far below peak years. Though Berry's Skipper numbers were lower at 13 than last year record high of 19, this is still an amazing number of this uncommon skipper. Experienced teams make a big difference in finding uncommon butterflies. We finished the count with 45 species and 741 individuals and counted ourselves lucky to get the count done at all. You can't beat the prairie though for weather-watching with its wide open spaces perfect for viewing storms rolling in.

Thanks to KPPSP personnel for transportation, access and continuing support for butterflies. Thanks to all participants who keep the counts lively and a learning experience for all – Dave

and Marga Cutler, Debbie Dixon, Jim DuBois, Sue Farnsworth, Mike Kanyuh, Tom Palmer, Nancy Prine, compiler Buck Cooper and the writer.

We greatly appreciate Lake Region Audubon Society's continuing support of KPS and DWP counts



## DISNEY WILDERNESS PRESERVE

near Poinciana, is an 11,000-acre mosaic of flatwoods, swamps, oak hammocks, streams, lakefronts and restored former pastures. This count fielded two teams inside the preserve for a total of nine people. Two teams – a roadside team and a garden team of one person each counted outside the preserve for eleven total participants. [Disney Wilderness Preserve](#)



### DWP COUNT RESULTS

One word summarizes ALL the counts we did this year – WET! Rain cut short some of our counts and others had limited access because of high water. At DWP we recorded the highest number of individuals seen over the eighteen years of the counts – 1501 and the second highest number of species – 54. It rained on us off and on part of the day. The rain paid dividends for butterflies in many host plants available and many nectar plants available. While most swallowtails had average or below average numbers, Black had the highest number at 60 that we have recorded over the years and Palamedes had the second highest number at 48. One outside team

hit a bonanza along roadsides with 86 Dainty Sulphurs, bringing the total for this tiny species to 90 for count day. Gray Hairstreaks were numerous with 207, the highest number ever seen on this count and almost quadruple last year's number. The outside garden team had the only Cassius Blues of the count totaling 19. Little Metalmark tied last year's high number of 6. Twenty-one Zebra Heliconians were the highest number seen and were recorded only by



stopped one team from searching

a known location for them inside the preserve. Inside teams recorded the most Variegated Fritillaries seen with 21. Only one each of the emperors was found after a slog through water to the edge of Lake Hatchineha. Queen had a high number of 52, the most recorded on the count over the years. Skippers were a mixed bag with good numbers of Horace's and Zarucco Duskywings but many of the grass skippers had low numbers or were not recorded at all this year. In only one other year though have we recorded butterfly numbers as high at DWP and that was in 2005, another wet year following our three hurricanes in 2004.

AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE



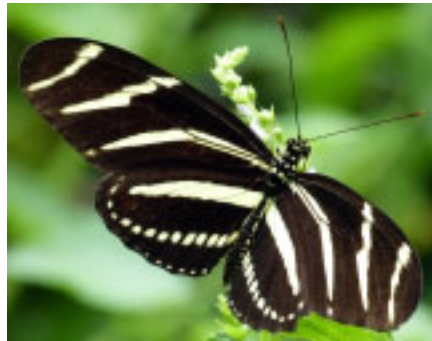
Highlights of APAFR were nectaring butterflies. Both Zebra Swallowtail and Georgia Satyr are rarely seen sitting still long enough to be caught in a photo.

Highlight of COLT CREEK SP was the surprising number of White M Hairstreaks - 32 - with 28 of them in a single location!



LAKE LOUISA STATE PARK

Not to be outdone, LLSP participants totaled 38 White Ms! This hairstreak had an incredible year! Other big numbers here were 6 Pipevine Swallowtails - the first time recorded on this count. Zebra Heliconian has made an astonishing comeback from freezes a few winters ago and we recorded the most ever for this count with 217.



BULL CREEK WMA includes Triple N Ranch WMA and Forever Florida. This is skipper territory especially Arogos and Forever Florida had 3. An added bonus was Snowy Orchid.



Thanks to DWP team members Dave and Marga Cutler, Brittany Glass, Kevin Kane, Eli Lopez, Diana Miller, Petra Royston, Tom Palmer, Nancy Prine, compiler Buck Cooper and the writer. We thank DWP for their continuing support in providing volunteers and transportation for the count. Thanks also to Eli Lopez for adding many eggs, caterpillars and chrysalids to the count. His yard is a butterfly paradise in Poinciana.



These counts occur approximately the same time of year - all of June and July. Buck compiles five other counts - Avon Park Air Force Range In Polk and Osceola Counties, Okeechobee in Okeechobee County, Lake Louisa State Park in Lake County, Bull Creek WMA in Osceola County and Colt Creek State Park in Polk County. We also participate in numerous other NABA counts. We welcome participation. You don't have to be an expert. Extra eyes are a big help. To participate in 2014, you can reach Buck at 863.439.2704.

