

Howard County Butterfly Survey Instructions – 2021

The Howard County Butterfly Survey project is co-sponsored by the Howard County Bird Club and the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks. The surveys collected are planned to track changes in species and populations over a long period. Since 2014, over 130 volunteers completed over 5,000 individual counts at 150 plus locations, documenting more than 146,800 individual butterflies of 80 species.

A survey/count consists of walking around a location and counting all the individual butterflies of each species seen. Ideally, each individual location should be surveyed once during each two-week period between April 1 and October 31. A group may cover a site together and all participants will be credited; however, only a single individual will have primary responsibility for record-keeping for each survey site. For maximum numbers and varieties of butterflies, the site leader should choose a day that is mostly sunny with a temperature above 60 degrees with little or mild winds.

The **Butterfly Report Form** is on the Howard County Bird Club website:

<https://howardbirds.website/butterflyreport/> Completing this on-line form is best done at the end of your count, either immediately at the location using a cell phone or later after returning home. You may use the **tally form provided** or some other note taking method to tally numbers of individual butterflies of each species as you walk. (Identification resources at <https://howardbirds.website/natural-history/butterflies/>)

Before beginning record: Date, Site Location, Names of Observers, Start Time, Temperature (F), % cloud cover, and Comments on habitat, predominant nectar plants, wind and other observations.

As you walk, enter the number of each species seen. Walking along a single circuit usually presents few problems regarding possible double-counting of individual specimens in arriving at species totals. A yard, a compact area (Robinson Nature Center top garden area), or a location you might double back on (Robinson Nature Center trails through woods) presents a different challenge. For example, if at 10:00 a.m. you observe 3 Spicebush Swallowtails in your yard or while walking your site in one direction and at 1:00 p.m. you count 5 in the same yard or on an identical return route, tabulate the highest number only. Do not add them.

At the end record: Stop Time, Temperature (F), % cloud cover, and Comments on species identification or other observations. Breaks may be taken (any longer than 15 minutes should be entered as a new Start Time), but each survey must be completed on a single day. (See Home Garden instructions for exceptions).

Photo Vouchers of Rare or Difficult-to-Identify Species: The butterfly species listed on the survey form are those most likely to be observed in Howard County. Any listed as Uncommon or Rare in the county *Biological Summary and Checklist* (plus a few common species that are difficult to separate) and highlighted in green on the website require a photo voucher. (With exceptions made for very experienced surveyors) There will always be butterflies that get away before photos can be obtained. You can enter the names of those species for which you are certain of the identification but lack photos in the Comments section. If you do not have a cell phone or a camera to provide photo documentation, take someone with you who does. All Howard County butterfly species can be identified from carefully taken photos, but the photographer should **take several photos of difficult species (upper and undersides for skippers)** to facilitate identification.

DO NOT COLLECT SPECIMENS. Permits to collect are required on all state and county land. Specimen collection is not part of this survey.

Submit photos and questions about the identity of butterflies to Linda Hunt raven10322@hotmail.com or Kevin Heffernan . After an identification has been confirmed you can then complete your form for that day.