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Annual butterfly census in Oldham reveals 36 species

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By Antwon Pinkston

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Summer often involves fun outdoor activities.

Collecting butterflies is one such activity, as well as learning about them and counting them.

Yesterday started off with rain, but the sun eventually shone, giving more than 20 people a chance to participate in an annual butterfly count at the University of Louisville's Horner Wildlife Sanctuary in Oldham County.



By Chris Hall, The Courier-Journal

Charles Covell looked at a butterfly in a jar as Richard Healy, left, and Eddie Huber looked on during yesterday's butterfly census. Covell, a retired biology professor at the University of Louisville, has been organizing the region's count for more than 20 years.

The count was led by Charles Covell, a retired U of L biology professor who has been organizing the region's butterfly census for more than 20 years. He is a co-founder of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists for the study of moths and butterflies and is the author of two books, "Butterflies and Moths of Kentucky" and "Field Guide to Moths of Eastern North America."

Covell was joined by other butterfly specialists who divided into teams to identify and count butterflies from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The counts provide information on the abundance or scarcity of butterflies, Covell said. Information gathered will be reported to the North American Butterfly Association, which began the counts in 1975, for its published results.



A cabbage butterfly was counted.

Each summer, there are more than 500 counts of butterflies across North America.

Last year's local count yielded 39 species -- such as the "buckeye" with its unique black, red and orange colors -- and more than 1,100 individual butterflies. Yesterday they counted 36 species and 2,040 individual butterflies. Volunteers used nets, binoculars, cameras and notebooks to identify and record their butterfly sightings.

Covell began collecting butterflies in Southern Pines, N.C., when he was 13.

"I became interested because of the thrill to capture a butterfly and discover so much about them," he said. "I'm also fortunate now to have the opportunity to teach other people."

Marcia Jumblatt, a former student of Covell's at U of L, participated in yesterday's count.

Jumblatt, who took Covell's insect biology course, said she has been counting butterflies for four years and enjoys it very much.

"The atmosphere is beautiful and the number of species we count is amazing," she said. "There's nothing else like it."

Richard Henderson, co-founder with Covell of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists, said he started collecting insects in 1962. He said he met Covell in 1962 after reading an article in a newspaper that said U of L had an entomologist.

"Identifying and collecting butterflies is very unique because there's so much to learn about different species," he said.

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