

The Common Buckeye event this year

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Common Buckeye’s normal range is the warmer southern states in the west (south of the Pacific Northwest) and northern Mexico. Although the buckeye butterfly may at times be a resident of southern Oregon, the warm weather pattern of 2014 caused the buckeye to push northward in the spring and increased our local populations.

Examples of extreme north or cooler locations that were notable for the buckeye this year are:

- The first official recorded sighting at Crater Lake National Park during a Lepidoptera bioblitz, a biological survey.
- The state of Washington reported its first known sightings near Spokane and Tri-Cities.
- A greater-than-normal population in late May in the Trinity National Forest and in locations in Northern California.

The Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) butterfly is of the Nymphalidae family of butterflies, whose wingspread can reach up to two and a half inches. It is a sight to behold these butterflies at any size—their eyespots are quite large and colorful when compared to our Wood Nymph and lady butterflies.

The buckeye frequents open areas near waterways, fields, roadsides and garden areas. The buckeye uses over 40 known larval food plants, including plantains, verbena, and many members of the Figwort family such as paintbrush, monkey flower, and penstemons. Nectar sources for the buckeye are a wide variety of wildflowers and garden flowers.

For three years a friend and I searched for buckeyes in southern Oregon, only to find some on a day trip to Northern California near Redding. They were hard to net for observation and gave us quite a run. They dart about quickly and wildly, making it difficult to approach them when they sit on the open ground.

The first one I saw this year had been netted by a student at Applegate School in the spring. It was exciting to see one of the students capture one.

After that there were many everywhere, and it didn’t take long for some of us to master netting them. The best opportunity I had for photos was in the butterfly habitat of Applegate School in September and October when the butterflies sat drinking nectar from flowers during warm days.

Staff at the Master Gardener section at Oregon State University Extension observed a buckeye ovipositing (laying) eggs on a slender mountain mint plant in their garden in August. With the warm sunny days, the butterflies may have had a few broods. As of late October, I was still seeing them in flight on sunny days.

There are a few other butterflies that make small migrations north, among them the Painted Lady. There was an increase in Painted Lady sightings this butterfly season too, but not like the buckeye event.

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Linda earned a naturalist certification from Siskiyou Field Institute and hosts two-day butterfly courses there.



Common Buckeye on tall aster.



Common Buckeye with closed wings on showy sedum.

Butterfly photos by Linda Kappen.

Wanted: Memories and stories of this valley’s wildlife

BY JAKOB SHOCKEY

As a kid, I remember hearing a story about Frank Decker. About how, when he was bear hunting, his gun jammed and a bear attacked him. How he rammed his arm into the bear’s mouth while he unjammed the rifle with the other. Then how he shot the bear from atop him and returned home to get his arm sewn up before going back into the woods with his wife for the bear meat.

I don’t remember where I heard this story so the details may not be strictly true, but as a boy it made an impression. I grew up just downstream from the Decker homestead and that story made Frank Decker the gold standard of tough.

Both hunting and how people interact with wildlife in this valley have changed. Just last week, as rifle season opened, I saw a couple standing on the gravel road up Woodrat Mountain. He wore sweatpants and a Day-Glo traffic vest, and she was wearing pajamas (no joke). It

was around 11 am, and they were peering over the edge of the road for deer, having strayed not ten feet from their new SUV. It was the weekend and they were “hunting.”

Here’s my pitch: I’m looking for stories from when hunting wasn’t just a weekend hobby. Stories of wildlife and the people who knew them, of trapping and hunting before this valley was tamed.

Applegate old-timers, this is a callout to you. I think it would be fun to hear your memories, tall tales and knowledge of our valley’s wildlife. Write me or give me a call. Let’s record these stories so that my daughter and your grandkids also might be impressed as children—so that this history isn’t forgotten.

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Rich and Kellie Halsted, who live on North Applegate Road, were amused to find this photo of an apparently curious elk on their critter cam.

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