

Beyond the Butterfly Garden

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Butterflies can be found at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge during any month or season, and throughout the year, visitors are encouraged to look beyond the Butterfly Garden to find them. As April begins, trees are leafing out and small yellow and white flowers cover the ground. By the end of the month, wildflowers will be showing up along the roadways. It's a time of great change.

Butterflies that have spent the winter as adults have mated and are laying eggs to create the next generation. This makes adult **Goatweed Leafwings** (below left) more commonly seen at the edges of the woods. Often all you will see is a fluttering orange butterfly, but if you patiently watch, it will land and you will see how plain the upper side is compared to the **Question Mark** (below right) that is also active now.



A common spring butterfly among the trees on the pad roads on Oil Field Road or out toward Sandy Point is the **Little Wood-satyr**. You



will see them bouncing along close to the ground, blending in with the dead leaves. They do not typically visit flowers. This species has two broods but only flies in mid-late spring through early summer. You might also

find two similar appearing butterflies in the woods near Meadow Pond: **Carolina Satyr** (left) and **Northern Pearly-eye** (right). These are



much less common but have been found on the refuge. Notice the differences in the eyespots at the outer edge of the wings.

Another group of very similar looking (and tiny) butterflies become very common at this time of year. One is seen almost year-round and one is only seen for about six weeks in late spring. Others may be seen occasionally throughout the spring, summer, and fall. The common **Gray Hairstreak** is found everywhere, feeding on many different flowers and can be used as the standard by which to compare others in the Gossamer-winged family.



Soapberry Hairstreak is nearly identical to Gray Hairstreak but is seen only in spring. Rarely found far from their larval food source, Soapberry trees, they will feed on flowers like Rough-leaf Dogwood. Note the additional white dash on both fore- and hindwing.

A frequent sight this spring on Oil Field Rd has been the **Red-banded Hairstreak**. As you pass slowly through the woods toward the lake, watch for movement in the leaf litter. These are smaller than Gray Hairstreak and often stay close to the ground.



In flight, the **Eastern Tailed-blue** will show its bright blue upper side, but when closed, it is very similar to the hairstreaks. Watch for these feeding on low flowers in mowed areas like Goode picnic area or

near oil wells away from the lake. Finally, not all hairstreaks are gray. Look for the green **Juniper Hairstreak** or other unusual hairstreaks in open fields around the refuge.

