**FIELD TRIP REPORT:** Butterflies at Independence Oaks County Park

**DATE:** July 22, 2023

**LEADER:** Doris Applebaum

**CO-LEADER:** Jeff Stacey

After several Saturdays with rain predicted, this field-trip Saturday had pleasant temperatures and no rain, as seven OAS members visited Independence Oaks County Park in Springfield Township to look for butterflies and whatever else might show up.

Since we never ignore birds, the group enjoyed seeing several species. However, rather annoying were a couple of Yellow-throated Vireos that allowed us to hear them for quite a while but refused to give us a good look.

Our butterfly sightings started out extremely well when we found several species obtaining some kind of nutrient from a gravel and dirt path near a marshy area. The marsh itself produced nothing of interest, but on the gravel path we got excellent looks at Red Admiral, American Lady, Eastern Comma, and Viceroy, all intently mining that gravel/dirt.

Although we managed to see several other species during the field trip, we never did find another spot quite as productive as that early one.

There were no surprises among the species that we saw, but there certainly were some surprises about what we did not see. In a park like Independence Oaks that has large areas of meadow, which should be excellent butterfly habitat, those areas were all but devoid of any butterflies at all.

Or perhaps it wasn’t really surprising, because we saw a number of signs informing the public that herbicides had been spread around in those areas to fight invasive plant species. Where we were fully expecting to see large numbers of Clouded and Orange Sulphurs, we saw none. We couldn’t even find a Cabbage White. Invasive species of plants may have been the targets, but apparently there were some unintended consequences as well.

Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable outing, and although not everyone saw all the species, we all saw many of the 16 on our list, as follows: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, Great Spangled Fritillary, Eastern Comma, Red Admiral, American Lady, Red-spotted Purple, Viceroy, Little Wood-Satyr, Common Wood-Nymph, Monarch (a nice total of 7), Silver-spotted Skipper, Northern Broken-Dash (skipper), Broad-winged Skipper, Dion Skipper, and Dun Skipper.