

Butterflies: If You Let It Grow, They Will Come

Article by Roberto Gaitan, Rio Grande Valley Chapter

What happens when you shrink the lawn? You get butterflies stopping by to visit!



A dozen Blue Metalmarks in a single crucita bush (Photo by Robert Gallardo).



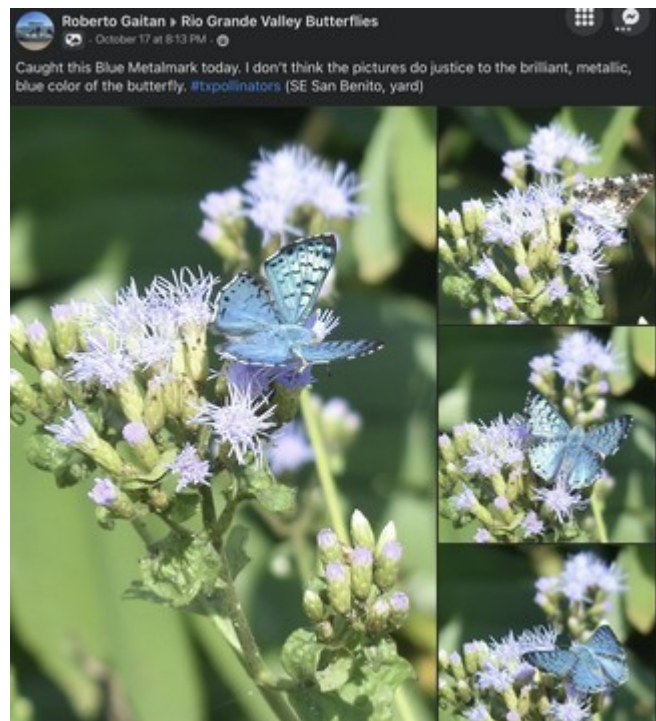
Attendees were told not to fill up on the front-yard appetizer (Photo by Robert Gallardo).

It began innocently enough. I posted some butterfly photos on the Facebook Group, Rio Grande Valley Butterflies as part of the Texas Pollinators BioBlitz.

At first I thought I was in trouble because I failed to include the location the photos were taken. After I included SE San Benito, I was asked what kind of place was this? After I said our yard, I was asked if someone could come by to see our gardens as a potential tour stop for the National Butterfly Center's 2022 Texas Butterfly Festival.

At first we were taken aback a bit because we would not call our lawn a garden. We have been shrinking our lawn for quite some time now and our butterflies were everywhere. Plus, did we really have butterflies that butterflyers would be interested in? Little did we know the dozens of Blue Metalmarks we were seeing would be of great interest to butterflyers.

Thus the show began!



We had four days of scouts coming by followed by the three days of tours for the festival. Every day ended with us being a bit more exhausted than the day before. It was great!

We basically had a crash course on butterflies of the RGV but, more importantly, butterflies of our home! After a week and roughly 100 guests, we have identified 84 butterfly species!

Common Name	Family	Common Name	Family
Band-celled sister	Admirals & Relatives	Brown Longtail	Spread-wing Skippers
Common Mestra	Admirals & Relatives	Dorantes Longtail	Spread-wing Skippers
Mexican Bluewing	Admirals & Relatives	Guava Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Ruddy daggerwing	Admirals & Relatives	Hermit skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Ceraunus Blue	Blues	Horace's Duskywing	Spread-wing Skippers
Marine Blue	Blues	Laviana White-Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Western Pygmy-Blue	Blues	Long-tailed Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Hackberry emperor	Emperors	Mazans scallopwing	Spread-wing Skippers
Tawny Emperor	Emperors	Mimosa Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Clouded Skipper	Grass-Skippers	Mournful Duskywing	Spread-wing Skippers
Common Mellana	Grass-Skippers	Sickle-winged Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Eufala Skipper	Grass-Skippers	Tropical Checkered-Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Fawn-spotted Skipper	Grass-Skippers	Turk's-cap White-Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Fiery skipper	Grass-Skippers	White Checkered-Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Julia's Skipper	Grass-Skippers	White-patched Skipper	Spread-wing Skippers
Ocola Skipper	Grass-Skippers	White-striped Longtail	Spread-wing Skippers
Olive-clouded Skipper	Grass-Skippers	White-tailed Longtail	Spread-wing Skippers
Sachem	Grass-Skippers	Cloudless Sulphur	Sulphurs
Southern Broken-Dash	Grass-Skippers	Dainty Sulphur	Sulphurs
Southern Skipperling	Grass-Skippers	Large Orange Sulphur	Sulphurs
Whirlabout	Grass-Skippers	Little Yellow	Sulphurs
Clytie Ministreak	Hairstreaks	Lyside Sulphur	Sulphurs
Dusky-blue Groundstreak	Hairstreaks	Mimosa Yellow	Sulphurs
Gray Hairstreak	Hairstreaks	Orange Sulphur	Sulphurs
Lantana Scrub-Hairstreak	Hairstreaks	Sleepy Orange	Sulphurs
Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak	Hairstreaks	Southern dogface	Sulphurs
Red-crescent Scrub-Hairstreak	Hairstreaks	Statira Sulphur	Sulphurs
Silver-banded hairstreak	Hairstreaks	Giant Swallowtail	Swallowtails
Gulf Fritillary	Heliconians & Fritillaries	Pipevine Swallowtail	Swallowtails
Mexican Fritillary	Heliconians & Fritillaries	American Lady	True Brushfoots
Variegated Fritillary	Heliconians & Fritillaries	Bordered Patch	True Brushfoots
Zebra Heliconian	Heliconians & Fritillaries	Common Buckeye	True Brushfoots
Blue Metalmark	Metalmarks	Painted Lady	True Brushfoots
Fatal Metalmark	Metalmarks	Pearl Crescent	True Brushfoots
Red-bordered Metalmark	Metalmarks	Phaon Crescent	True Brushfoots
Rounded Metalmark	Metalmarks	Red Admiral	True Brushfoots
Walkers Metalmark	Metalmarks	Theona Checkerspot	True Brushfoots
Monarch	Monarchs	Tropical Buckeye	True Brushfoots
Queen	Monarchs	Vesta Crescent	True Brushfoots
Soldier	Monarchs	White Peacock	True Brushfoots
South Texas / Carolina Satyr	Satyrs	Checkered White	Whites
American Snout	Snouts	Giant White	Whites

We will have to add, that butterflyers are a friendly bunch of folks. Given butterflies do not wake up until the sun has warmed up the day, butterflies do not come out on cold rainy days, and butterflies go to bed before the sun goes down, butterflyers are well rested and lively.



*Troy, Erin, Barbara, Roberto, Maria Luisa, Mary Lynn
(Photo by Mary Lynn)*



*Jeffrey Glassberg, Roger Woodruff,
Ryan Rodriguez (Photo by Roger
Woodruff)*

We continue to venture out in our yard to see what butterflies are visiting. We have begun adding to our wildscape with host plants for butterflies we saw nectaring but also host plants for butterflies we would like to see. It means our lawn will continue to shrink, but our butterflies are okay with that.



Blue Metalmark



Common Mestra



Gray Hairstreak



Guava Skipper & Giant Swallowtail



Mimosa Skipper



Pipevine Swallowtail & Queen



Pipevine Swallowtail



Red Admiral



Red-bordered Metalmark



Silver-banded Hairstreak



Southern Dogface



White Peacock

A few of the butterfly species found in our yard – photos by Roberto Gaitan