

# DCLS NEWS

The Dallas County

Lepidopterists'

Society

Est. 1995

Purpose:

To provide a forum where people may gather who share an interest in butterflies and moths, whether that interest takes the form of collecting, gardening, photography, study or casual observation.

Membership is free.

## DCLS Field Trip Saturday to Mountain View College

The next meeting of the Dallas County Lepidopterists' Society will be this coming Saturday, October 8th at 10:00 a.m. We will walk the nature trail and wildflower area on west/northwest side of the campus to see what species are on the wing.

The weather forecast for this weekend looks good, with temps warming on Saturday into the low 70's with lots of sun. I'll go out on a limb here and predict that we'll see many monarchs migrating through the Dallas area this weekend.

Mountain View College is located at the intersection of Duncanville Road and Illinois Avenue in the Oak Cliff area of south Dallas. If coming from the downtown Dallas area, take I-35

south to the Illinois exit and follow it to Duncanville Road. Turn right on Duncanville Road and proceed to the entrance to the Mountain View College parking lot. Turn left once you get into the parking lot area; you will see the wildflower/nature area on your left. For directions from other points, go to Yahoo Maps and put in "Duncanville Rd at Illinois Avenue."

We have visited this area in the past and found a good number of species, but with drought conditions across the area it will be interesting to see what we find. There is a good amount of sage in bloom as well as some asters and gayfeather.

See you Saturday!

## Southern Visitors: Invasion of the Sulphurs, Skippers and Soldiers

If it is fall in north Texas you can count on some new butterflies in the fields and gardens. Species from the south start reaching the more northern limits of their range at this time of year and this often brings

new butterflies for the year to the area. In recent weeks there have been an incredible number of Large Orange Sulphurs (*Phoebis agarithe*) in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, with it (continued on page 3)



## In the Butterfly Garden

### Turnsole – A summer annual

By Tina Dombrowski, Texas Discovery Gardens

The origins of the annual Turnsole (*Heliotropium indicum*) are in question. While some botanical references claim the species is native to South America and the South Texas Plains to the Edwards Plateau, others claim it 'may' have originated in Africa. Perhaps plant scientists will never be certain as it is now considered a pan-tropical weed. Turnsole has established its range comfortably in all tropical and subtropical regions around the world. It grows naturally in low moist areas, along stream banks and in disturbed sites. Under garden conditions, Turnsole should be planted in full sun and allowed to dry out between watering. Plants grow upright from 2' to 3' tall and just as wide, although pruning can help shape plants, encourage branching and increase flower production. Blue-violet to white flowers develop on long flower stalks from the middle of the stalk towards the tips. As the flowers mature along the stalks, the curled tips, which are shaped like a scorpion's tail, uncoil. Flowers appear throughout the summer and into fall. Not particular to soil type, Turnsole will thrive in clay soil and amended soils. Plants become spindly and susceptible to mildew if planted in shady sites. Seed ripens throughout the summer and fall months, turning brown and dropping to the ground insuring new plants for the following summer. Seed can be harvested and sown the following year directly into the garden in May. Chemical extracts of Turnsole exhibit anti-inflammatory and wound healing properties, and are generally not browsed by herbivores.

This member of the Borage Family (Boraginaceae) is an excellent addition to the butterfly habitat. Many butterfly species will feed on the flower nectar. Queen and Monarch male butterflies are irresistibly drawn to Turnsole, but it is the male Queen butterfly

which utilizes the plant substances to produce pheromones, including the toxin danaidone which attracts females. Danaidone can be transferred to the females during mating as a 'nuptial gift', incorporated into the fertilized eggs and into the female butterfly tissues to increase their chances of survival. There is some interesting research on these plant substances, referred to as pyrrolizidine alkaloids or PAs, which are utilized by some species of adult moths and butterflies.

The Texas Discovery Gardens offers Turnsole plants at the annual Butterfly Plant Sale, held the first Saturday in June. (Turnsole looks much nicer in the garden than in a pot.) Seed is usually available at the DCLS Seed Exchange meeting in February. Occasionally, a seed source can be found over the internet as well. Turnsole (*Heliotropium indicum*) is a 'hot' weather butterfly garden annual for the good old Texas summertime.



Turnsole (*Heliotropium indicum*)

## Southern Visitors: Invasion of the Sulphurs, Skippers and Soldiers

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not uncommon to see a half dozen or more on a given day. Identical in size to the Cloudless Sulphur, the males are bright, unmarked orange while females can be either mottled orange or white with a hint of pink.

A more unusual visitor that has been sighted several times during late summer and early fall is the White Angled-Sulphur (*Anteos clorinde*). It's large size, yellow patch on the forewing and strong, rapid flight make it difficult to confuse with any other butterfly on the wing. There has been a strong immigration of these throughout much of the state, with reports from the Rio Grande Valley, Houston, San Antonio, Austin and Dallas and Fort Worth.

As it has for the past several years, the Soldier (*Danaus eresimus*) has shown up again in north Texas. To the casual observer, this species can blend in quite easily with the numerous Queens we get every year. Like them, it has a great affinity for taking nectar from Gregg's Mistflower (*Eupatorium greggii*). For details on how to tell the two species apart, check out the Soldier species page on the "Butterflies of Dallas County" section of the DCLS website.

Other species of note which have been seen repeatedly in recent weeks are the Lyside Sulphur (*Kricogonia lyside*), Orange-banded Sulphur (*Phoebis philea*), Hermit Skipper (*Grais stigmaticus*) and Sickie-winged Skipper (*Eantis tamenund*). More details and photos of them can be found on their respective species pages.

October is a great time for butterflies in north Texas, so keep your eyes open and nets and cameras handy.



Female Large Orange Sulphur (*Phoebis agarithe*)



White Angled-Sulphur (*Anteos clorinde*)



Soldier (*Danaus eresimus*)