

Arden Jones

9 August 2011

Raoul Internship Report

I feel bold enough to say that my decision to apply for an internship last semester has proven to be the most significant undertaking of my life. When my partner, Eileen Schaeffer, and I originally began discussing the possibility of designing a butterfly survey on St. Catherines Island together, we were both completely oblivious to inestimable experiences ahead of us. Apart from our actual butterfly survey, we were able to both share our findings with others and receive a wealth knowledge from some of the most enlightening and motivated eco-activists we have ever met.

We achieved our original goal of completing a 6-week habitat-based survey, assessing the butterfly species found on St. Catherines Island and their interactions with different habitat types- with great success. Our final scientific report was very thorough yet concise, and we addressed all of our original hypotheses. We found the severe drought the East Coast has been experiencing this summer to be but a slight deterrent to our butterfly-chasing aspirations.

As part of our proposal, we also promised to lay the foundations for an easily accessible, organized photo-documented inventory of all the butterfly and plant species we observed in the field. The final product has proven to be quite glorious. Pradip Malde dedicated precious time and energy into teaching us how to use advanced photography software called “Lightroom.” We used it to organize our 4,000+ picture inventory. His tutorial will also definitely help us in the future with similar projects.

Of course, the summer would not have been the same without the celestial presence of our mentor, Christa Hayes. Her expansive list of botanical and lepidopteran knowledge was a godsend to us as we began the creative process of forming our study once arriving on the island. Christa gave us the eyes we needed to see our subjects, the graceful butterflies and their humble host and nectar plants, in a whole new, magnificent light. Working under the guidance of such a fabulous and knowledgeable mentor as Christa Hayes was a dream come true.

This summer has developed into something more meaningful to us than words could ever begin to describe, and we are eternally grateful to everyone on St. Catherines and at Sewanee who made it all happen. Thank you!

Doing a butterfly survey was not our only accomplishment this summer. We were also involved in many side projects that followed the summer theme of coastal butterflies and plants. Below, we included some of these triumphs.

(After a visit to Little St. Simon's where we led a butterfly survey and presented a slideshow for the island's staff and guests)

Butterfly Surveys/St. Catherines Island Interns- Christa Hayes and her interns, Eileen and Arden visited from St. Catherines Island Tuesday to do a butterfly survey. We surveyed along Beach Road, at the Gazebo, along Marsh Road, East Myrtle Pond Road, and North End Road finding a total of 9 different species. We had two guests come along and we were lucky enough to see a Giant Swallowtail and a Queen ovipositing! In one location on Beach Road we were all able to see a Giant Swallowtail (the largest butterfly in North American) and an Eastern Pygmy Blue (the smallest butterfly in North America) in the same field of view! After lunch, Eileen and Arden did a presentation in the barn for guests on the life cycle of the Giant Swallowtail then Christa followed up with pictures of everything that we had seen while monitoring on LSSI. Here is a link to an article on the Coastal Wildscapes website by Eileen and Arden about their work on St. Catherines: <http://www.coastalwildscapes.org/2011/thirsty-butterflies-how-drought-has-affected-our-coastal-lepidopteran-populations/>

We wrote an article for the Coastal WildScapes website. Christa Hayes is very involved in this conservationist community.

Students publish study of island butterfly populations

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Arden Jones and Eileen Schaeffer, both C'13, are graduates of the 2010 [Island Ecology Program](#). On St. Catherine's Island last summer they developed an interest in the island's butterfly populations, and returned this year to conduct a habitat-based survey of those populations. Their findings have been published online as [Thirsty Butterflies: How Drought Has Affected our Coastal Lepidopteran Populations](#).

Jones and Schaeffer worked this summer under the supervision of Christa Hayes, a former conservation manager for Jekyll Island, nature-based program developer, and founding member of Coastal WildScapes. Sewanee professors David Haskell, Pradip Malde, Ken Smith, and Kirk Zigler assisted on the project.

Coastal WildScapes works to actively preserve and restore the highly significant biodiversity of Southeastern coastal ecosystems.



Eileen and Arden (dubbed the “Butterfly Girls” by the other island-dwellers) at one of our survey sites in a maritime forest.