

The June 8<sup>th</sup> BioBlitz was a great opportunity to explore Whiterock Conservancy and discover its many species of butterflies. Participants were able to cover a variety of potential habitats by scouring woodlands, gardens, restored prairies, and waterways around the property. While conditions were somewhat windy, the warm temperature and bright sun brought out the butterflies.

Participants documented 29 species of butterfly during six hours of surveying. While none of the species found are uncommon or of special concern, the diversity of species is a great indicator of the health of the ecosystem. Great Spangled Fritillary and Sulfurs were found in the greatest abundance, which is not surprising considering these species' ability to occupy a wide range of habitats and their prevalence throughout Iowa. Six out of 11 possible species of Sulfurs were found at Whiterock, which was a very good representation for this group. Surprisingly, only one species of swallowtail was noted, the Black Swallowtail.

There are around 120 species of butterflies in Iowa. Many of these species populate the unique ecosystem features on the fringes of our state, but they can be found in any healthy environment. Butterflies act as bioindicators, sending a clear signal that an area is on the right track with their presence. Unfortunately, their numbers are being lowered by threats such as habitat loss and pesticides. Those interested in attracting butterflies can take a page out of Whiterock Conservancy's book and plant a mix of native grasses and flowers in their gardens.

Thank you to all who participated in the BioBlitz!