

OBSERVATIONS FROM NATURE

SEPTEMBER, 2011

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
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September 2

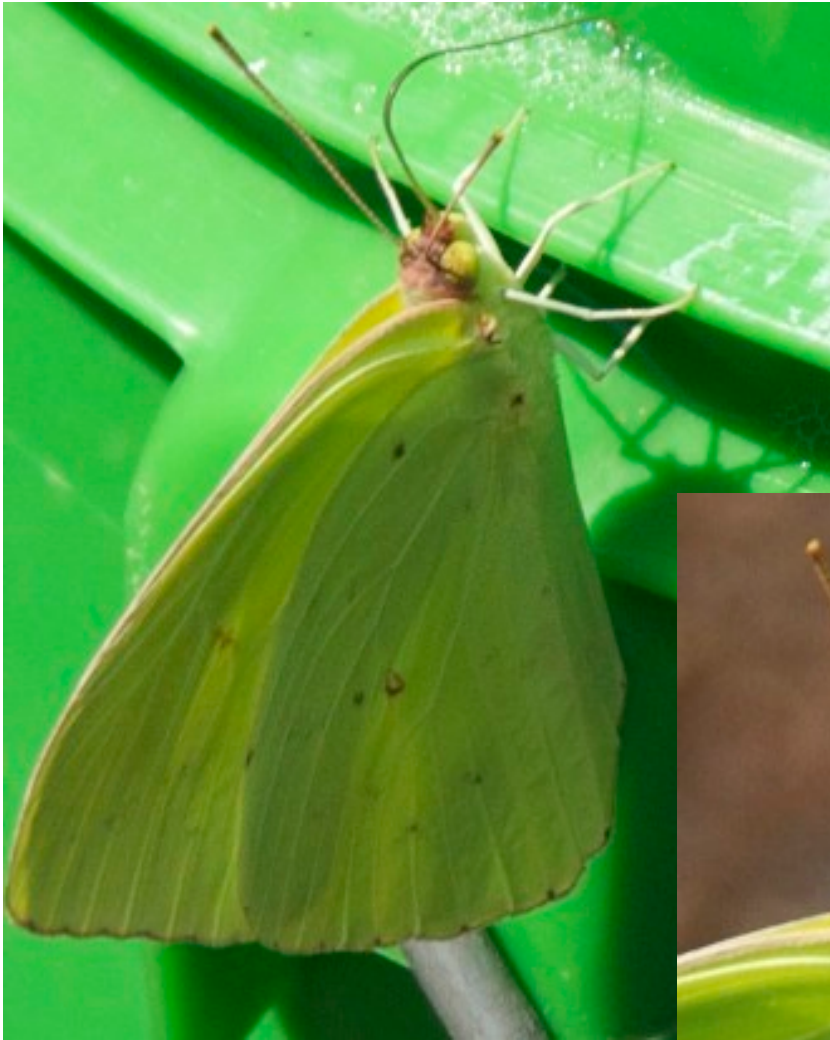
Here is a nice little climbing member of the legume (bean) family found growing in the field along our driveway. It is a Butterfly Pea (*Centrosema virginianum*). You can see one of its trifoliate leaflets just above the stem supporting the vine. This little plant has a very wide range; it grows from Argentina all the way up to the southeastern United States.



September 4

The American Beautyberries (*Callicarpa americana*) are setting fruit. The photograph below shows the development of color in the berries from light green when young to deep magenta when they mature.





September 5

I was washing my car in the driveway, when I saw this Cloudless Sulphur butterfly (*Phoebis sennae*) land on my pail. This is our most common large Sulphur. Although, it cannot be seen here, it has nice, bright yellow upper wing surfaces. What you can see here is its interesting facial pattern and its long proboscis.



This colorful caterpillar was crawling across the roadway. It is the larva of an Orange-striped Oakworm Moth (*Anisota senatoria*). These are occasionally numerous enough to defoliate several acres of oak trees.



September 9

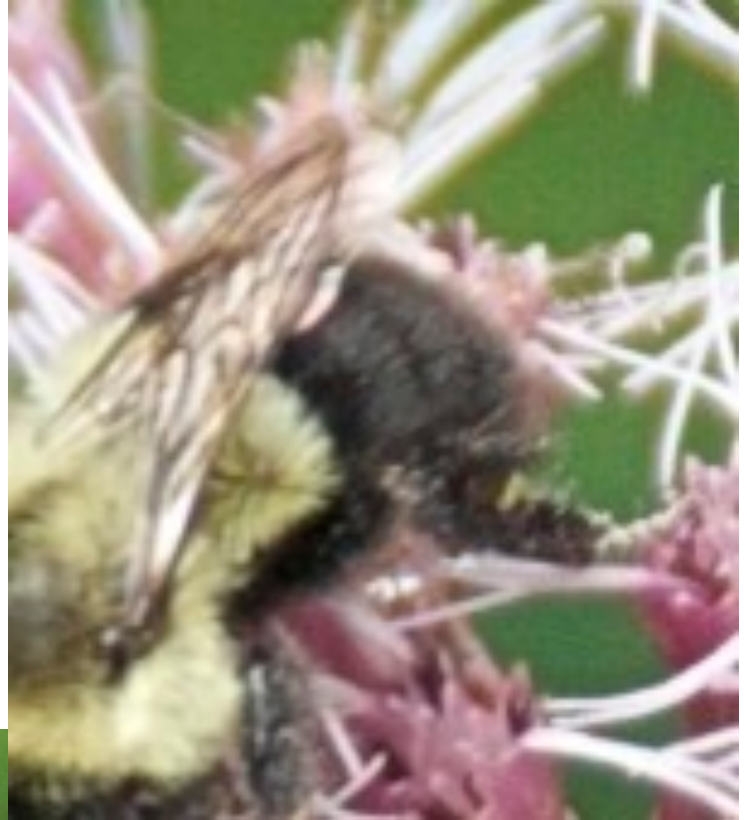
We took a drive to Cane Creek Falls near Dahlonega in North Georgia. Several wildflowers were in bloom. A little Gray Hairstreak butterfly (*Strymon melinus*) landed on a head of Ironweed (*Vernonia* sp.).





At Cane Creek Falls these two species of *Lobelia* were flowering. On the left above is the Cardinalflower (*L. cardinalis*). The blue spike on the right is Downy Lobelia (*L. puberula*). Notice the similarity on flower shape between the two species.

Last month, I showed various insects that came to pollinate the Winged Sumac shrubs near my driveway. One of these was a Carpenter Bee that looked superficially similar to a Bumblebee except that its abdomen was shiny black with few hairs. At Cane Creek Falls, I saw this Bumblebee (*Bombus* sp.) at work on a flower of Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*). One can see that its abdomen is covered with hairs, unlike that of the carpenter bee. “Bumble” in Middle English meant to make a buzzing sound, thus the name Bumblebee.

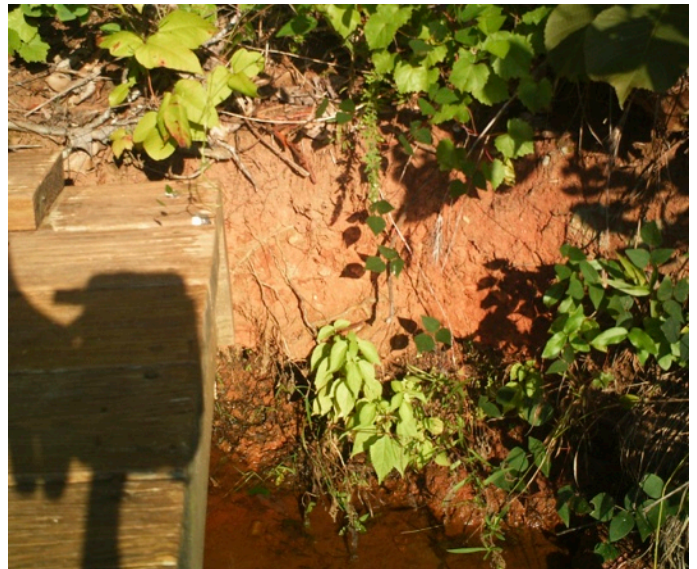


September 15



I have been noticing empty mussel shells on the bottom of the lake near my boat dock. Here are some that I fished out and photographed. These are probably the type of mussel known as Asian Clams (*Corbicula fluminea*). This species was apparently introduced to the U.S. about 1938, and is now very widespread. Although many mussel species live only in flowing water, this one can live in ponds and lakes. I am not sure what could have been eating these. However, raccoons, muskrats, herons, and egrets are known to eat them.

So I set up my tracking camera on the boat dock to see if I could photograph anything in the spot where the empty mussel shells were found.



Here is a photograph taken the first night after the camera was set up. This certainly does not prove that raccoons are the mussel-eaters. I guess I would have to catch one “in the act” to be able to say that.



September 20

The cotton bolls have now burst open and the fields are filled with beautiful white puffs.



Cotton flowers have 3, 4, or 5 carpels. The one shown on the right clearly had 5, because it has split into 5 segments.



The cotton fibers that are spun to make the fabric are growths from the surface of the seeds. On the right can be seen one of the seeds with attached fibers. Eli Whitney's great contribution was the invention of the cotton gin to mechanically remove fibers from the seeds.





September 25

When visiting a state park about 20 miles south of Athens in May, I was surprised to see a shrub with nice red flowers. It was a Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*). The top two



pictures show the flowers as seen in May. Now the fruits have developed (middle left), and they are apple-sized. When I sliced one open, the many seeds inside are visible. The edible part of the pomegranate is the fleshy red aril that surrounds each seed. This particular plant was apparently valued for its flowers rather than its fruit. The fruits have not turned the nice red color of the edible types, and the juice that I was able to squeeze out was quite sour.



Septemer 28

The Winged Sumac that I featured last month with all its insects on it has now set fruit, so the pollination was successful.

The pictures below depict an Eastern Amberwing (*Perithemis tenera*) that landed on the boat dock.

The photograph on the left shows how the sun shining through its amber wings creates an amber shadow. The picture below shows this little dragonfly's nice striped abdomen.





September 30

I went to look over the vines of the passionflowers that grow along our driveway. I saw the Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) shown above flitting about. You can see its nice spotted head and clubbed antennae in the photograph directly above.

Gulf Fritillary larvae only feed on Passionflower, so I looked around on the vines. I did not find any Gulf Fritillary larvae, but I did find a very small (1 inch) larvae of a Variegated Fritillary (*Eutoieta claudia*). These larvae feed on Passionflower vines along with a number of other plants.