



The Search is On!

The Vermont Butterfly Atlas is taking flight for a second time.

| BY NATHANIEL SHARP

With many new technologies available that were not around during the first atlas, butterfly observation has never been easier.

Insects are declining globally in what some have called the “insect apocalypse.” While birds, mammals, reptiles, and other organisms receive a great deal of attention from scientists and the media alike, invertebrates often get overlooked. Twenty years ago, the Vermont Butterfly Atlas looked to change that by mobilizing a dedicated base of 150 butterfly enthusiasts to document butterflies across the state. The 36,000+ butterfly observations from the first atlas informed new distribution maps, abundance estimates, and conservation statuses, and resulted in the discovery of several new species never before recorded in Vermont.

Since the first atlas, several more new species have been added to the state butterfly list, many of which were found in backyards or roadside meadows. Butterflies can be found anywhere there are flowers, so just about everywhere! You can enjoy watching butterflies anywhere in the state, from your flower garden and local nature preserve to the peak of Mount Mansfield and the bogs and fens

of the Northeast Kingdom. Butterflies, like many of us, prefer warm weather, sunny days, and light breezes. This makes beautiful spring and summer days ideal for getting outside and documenting butterflies in your backyard, neighborhood, or further afield.

With many new technologies available that were not around during the first atlas, butterfly observation has never been easier. The powerful smartphone cameras many of us now have in our pockets can take crisp and identifiable photos of most Vermont butterfly species, with some patience and stealth on the photographer’s part. Keeping track of your butterfly observations is now easier than ever with eButterfly. By using the app, butterfly enthusiasts can get identification help from experts and advanced AI tools, track their butterfly life list, view distribution maps, and more. This app also happens to be contributing valuable butterfly data to the atlas.

The first sunny days of spring have already started to open the butterfly



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floodgates, with Mourning Cloaks (see page 12), Compton's Tortoiseshells, and a handful of other species already reported in Vermont this year. Now is the perfect time to get involved with the atlas and document your local butterflies. If you're curious about contributing butterfly observations to the atlas, visit the Second Vermont Butterfly Atlas website, where you can find recorded webinars, a list of upcoming events, atlas survey protocols, and other helpful tips and tricks for finding and identifying butterflies. **FN**

A NEW FACE AT VCE



Development Coordinator
ALYSSA FISHMAN

This winter, VCE welcomed Alyssa Fishman as our new Development Coordinator. Encouraged by her parents' interests in marine ecosystems, Alyssa has long been curious about ecology and conservation. Over time that love evolved into a passion for farming and managing agroecosystems. Along the way Alyssa earned a B.A. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, a B.A. in Neuroscience, and a M.S. in Sustainable Food Systems, and gained a wealth of experience as an educator and farmer. She even owned a cut flower farm in Montana. When Alyssa decided to explore another area of interest—nonprofit fundraising—in her new Vermont home, we were delighted to welcome her aboard. Welcome, Alyssa!

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