

*Simply Incredible*  
*Week at the National Butterfly Center*

Monday I was on my way to San Antonio for a meeting and my phone started ringing, a Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) was in the garden. In the north a Mourning Cloak is not that uncommon but in the Rio Grande Valley it is about as rare as a \$3 bill. I longed to go back and shoot a photo or two but held the course hoping it would be there Tuesday.

Simply incredible has been the description of the week at the National Butterfly Center. Yes the Mourning Cloak came back and was there at when I returned from San Antonio at 3PM. It is a large butterfly that is purple/black on the upper side with a white to yellow margin around the wings. There is a row of iridescent blue spots just inside this border.

But about 100 miles out of San Antonio my phone started ringing again. This time it was the Orion Cecropian (*Historis odius*). Sightings in the Rio Grande Valley could be counted on a couple of fingers.

This is an extremely large butterfly dwarfing regulars like the Mexican Bluewing or Tawny Emperor. A photo in A Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America shows one with wings open covering an opened hand.

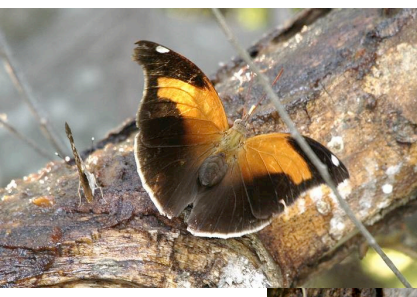
A crowd close to 30 quickly formed on the National Butterfly Center's Hackberry Trail to be all they could be at shooting pictures of this magnificent butterfly. As the cameras were clicking the Orion would occasionally open its wings showing off its flaming orange and the crowd would exclaim with delight.

Indeed this week has been like a convergence of rarities, some from the North and others from far South across the border. **The one common denominator has been "Banana Brew"**. Some butterflies skip the nectar of flowers and go for things like sap, or rotting fruit and with almost without fail the Banana Brew has been the delicacy of choice for the rare butterflies.

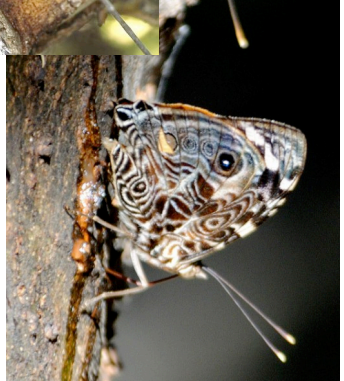
But there were other rarities this week that will also bring in a crowd and that is the Blomfield's Beauty (*Smyrna blomfildia*). Unbelievably it wasn't just one but two that were seen Tuesday. This Blomfield's Beauty with its wings folded gives an intricate pattern that no human being could artistically duplicate or create and the colors are unparalleled. Catch it with

its wings open however and the fiery orange with 3 white dots will take your breath away. **They too were feasting on the rich flavors found on the logs dripping with Banana Brew.**

The drought has been severe but for whatever reason the National Butterfly Center has been finding it to be a year of firsts and this week as many have described has been "Simply Incredible".



**Orion  
Cecropian**



**Blomfield's Beauty**

**Banana Brew Class**

**December 2, 2011**

**Starts at 10 AM at the Visitor's Center**

**Begins with Slide Show and Continues at  
the Big Palapa at the Park**

The tuition is \$15 with each participant receiving a Banana Brew feeding station plus recipe for the Banana Brew. Bring in the Butterflies to your garden.

To RSVP your seat in the class call 956-583-5400 or e-mail mariposa4770@yahoo.com.