

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

Baltimore Checkerspot and Turtlehead

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This week we feature a pair of species, both of which are visible only during the later parts of summer in the Sax-Zim Bog. These species have a close relationship and we hope to see at least one of these species during our Butterflies of the Sax-Zim Bog Field Trip this weekend, July 16th! Today, we feature Baltimore Checkerspot and Turtlehead!

Butterflies have a well-known relationship to host plants, whether those plants are the primary food source for the caterpillars (milkweeds and Monarchs) or primary nectar sources for adults (Labrador Tea and Freija Fritillary). It is hard to consider one of those species, without the other, especially if you are hoping to find one! For Baltimore Checkerspot, Turtlehead's presence on the landscape is a must.

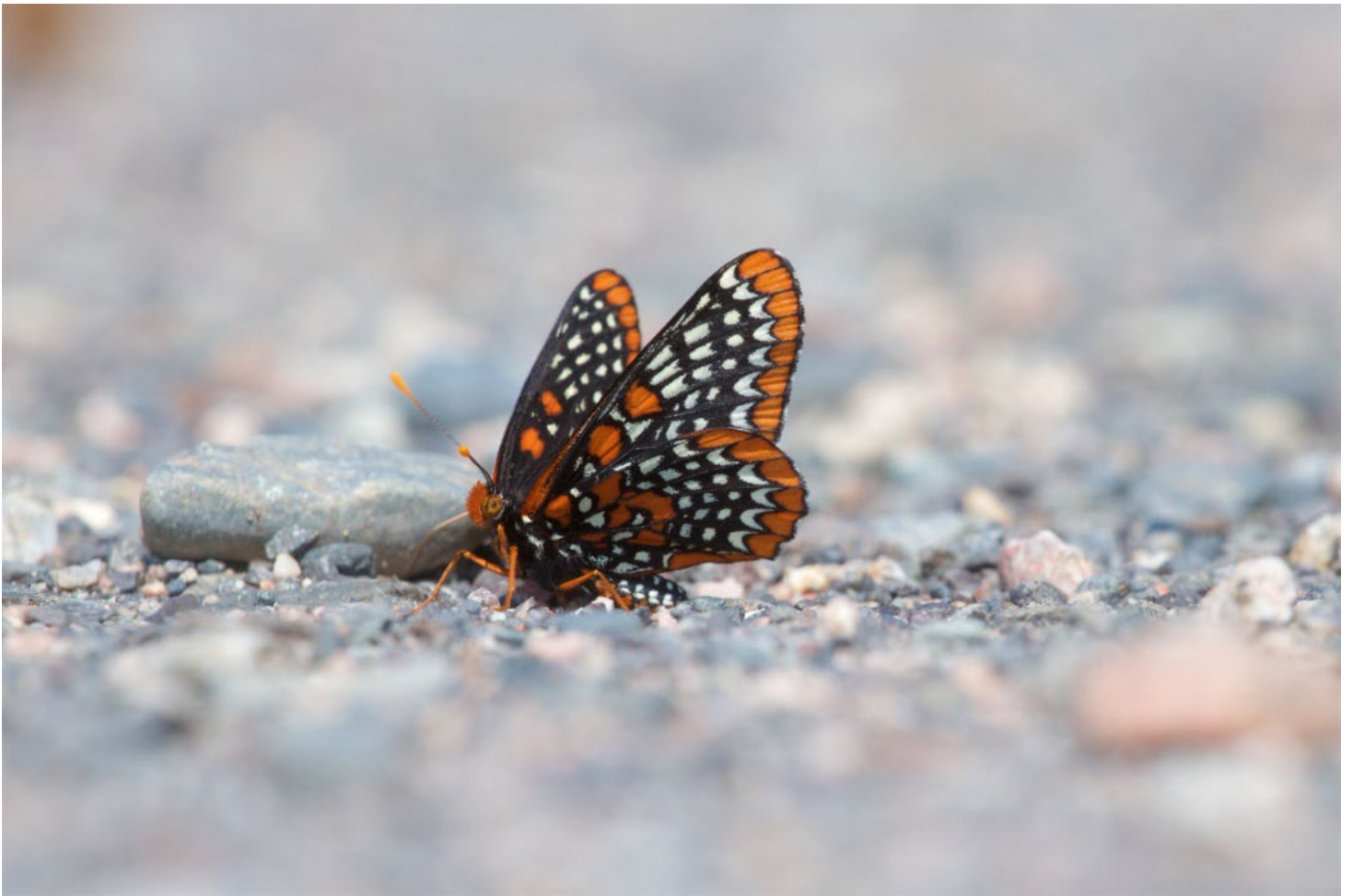
Baltimore Checkerspot is perhaps one of the most striking butterflies in our area. There are not other butterflies that sport white and orange checkering over a black background. These showy butterflies are frequently found near their host plants,

nectaring on a wide variety of species, but can be reliably found in our area using Spreading Dogbane. This species is considered to be locally uncommon, which means where you find its host plant, you are likely to find the adults or caterpillars, but not away from those plants.

Speaking of plants... Turtlehead is a lovely wetland species! It's name, unsurprisingly, comes from the shape of the flowers. Depending on the angle, the flowers look very much like the head of a turtle. Minnesota is on the western edge of this species range, though it can be quite abundant in the right habitat. If you are hoping to see this species in the Sax-Zim Bog, look no further than the abundant wet ditches around the area or right along the start of the boardwalk at Warren Nelson Bog! They should begin blooming in the next week and continue to bloom into August.

More information with the photos below!

(Photos of Baltimore Checkerspot on the ground by Sparky Stensaas, all other photos by Head Naturalist Clinton)



What a beautiful butterfly! Baltimore Checkerspot is striking from every angle: the strong orange wing borders are dramatic against the black and white checkering in the wing.



Turtlehead can be difficult to find when it is not flowering, as it's narrow leaves blend in against a background of sedges and grasses. However, when they begin flowering, the large white flowers are hard to miss!



Baltimore Checkerspots often perch quite low on vegetation when not nectaring. They also typically droop their wings, like the one above, when at rest. Males use these low perches to find females at nectaring locations.



Checkerspot caterpillars can be hard to ID! This caterpillar just so happens to be feeding on Turtlehead, which helps us ID it as Baltimore Checkerspot. Caterpillars of this species often feed communally and will spin protective webs while feeding. Not pictured were the 4 other caterpillars on the same plant!