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### ***Hackberry Butterfly***

Many will remember 2012 for the dry weather issues plaguing the area. Fewer remember it for a phenomenon repeating itself right now: the 'invasion' of the hackberry butterfly. Mass hatch of this butterfly isn't a surprise. It happens here annually. Fortunately, it doesn't happen in numbers like this year, but when it does, we take notice.

Why here and now? We don't have a great answer for that. Outbreaks like we've seen thus far are sporadic and unpredictable. Maybe it's the winter we had? Maybe it's moisture conditions? Maybe we're just lucky. Whatever the reason, they're presence can be alarming, made worse as they 'rain' on vehicles as they pass or swarm you as you walk by.

Even more alarming should be the (potential) damage the larval form of this many butterflies could cause. Fortunately, their activity is typically confined to hackberry trees. The 2012 infestation resulted in significant damage to hackberries, but even then, most recovered nicely the following year. Damage to other tree species or field crops/turf/etc... like we might see with species like fall armyworm is not expected. They're mostly just a nuisance.

Speaking of fall armyworm, we have yet to find them in scouting locations in the state yet this summer. Since they migrate in, a trapping network has been established across the eastern third of the state in an attempt to monitor for their arrival. Thus far, we've not confirmed the presence of moths here just yet. When we know more, we'll pass it along.