

**Survey for additional colonies of the endemic Black
Hills Atlantis fritillary butterfly,
*Speyeria atlantis pahasapa***

A report to the South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks
Wildlife Diversity Small Grants Program
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Introduction

Although known to science for many years, only recently (Scott et. al 1998) was the Black Hills Atlantis fritillary (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) given a formal scientific name. It is a relict butterfly most closely related to populations in the Riding Mountains of Manitoba, Canada (*Speyeria atlantis hollandii*) and the Rocky Mountains of WY and CO (*Speyeria atlantis sorocko*). It is also believed to be related to another Black Hills endemic fritillary, *Speyeria hesperis lurana*.

Unlike the common and widespread *lurana*, however, *S. a. pahasapa* is scarce and restricted to wet, sedgy habitats along creeks. The type locality of *S. a. pahasapa* is the wetlands on the west end of Deerfield Reservoir in Pennington Co. SD.

Previous to this study, *S. a. pahasapa* was known from Crook Co. WY (2 sites), Lawrence Co. SD (6 sites in 2 general areas), Pennington Co. (3 sites, all proximal to Deerfield Reservoir), and Custer Co. SD (2 sites) (K.Roever, personal communication; G. Marrone, personal communication; Marrone 2002).

From a conservation viewpoint, it was important to learn more about this localized butterfly. It appeared to be a bioindicator species of sedge marshes and their associated flora and fauna. Previous knowledge of *S. a. pahasapa* indicated a small total population, with the worldwide distribution limited to the Black Hills. It was thought that the species may warrant status as a state- or federally-listed endangered species.

The goal of this study was to survey for additional colonies of the butterfly and determine its rarity and distributional status.

Methods

Habitat that appeared appropriate, based on the authors' previous experience with *S. a. pahasapa* (i.e., wet sedge marshes with flowing water), was surveyed at two different times: mid-July and early August. These times coincide with the flight activity period of *S. a. pahasapa* according to published records and the authors' experience. By searching at two different times, we would hopefully be able to identify colonies by finding the commoner males (mid-July) and then breeding colonies, indicated by females (early August).

In addition to surveying for *S. a. pahasapa*, notes on other butterflies present, their abundance, nectar sources, and habitat quality were taken.

Results

Results of the survey are shown in Appendices 1 & 2. Twenty sites were identified as having *S. a. pahasapa* present, and are mapped in Appendix 2. Of these 20 sites, three of these were previously-known sites in which we verified the presence of *S. a. pahasapa*. Seventeen of these sites were new localities for this species, although several of these

sites were in close proximity to each other. In total, an estimate of 150 *S. a. pahasapa* adults was made, based on visual counts.

Because of the success of finding so many additional colonies of the butterfly, *S. a. pahasapa* can no longer be considered rare. However, this species still has a limited distribution and is a bioindicator of permanent montane wetlands in the Black Hills. From previous experience with *S. a. pahasapa* in the Black Hills, it appeared that the presence of the butterfly was closely correlated to several factors: the presence of Black Hills spruce, flowing water, and (relatively) high elevation. However, not all of these factors were present at each site. Despite this, there still appears to be a positive correlation, or at least a trend, with these factors and presence of the butterfly. One exception was perhaps the site on Upper French Creek, and even here, the creek bed was muddy, indicating that water was present earlier in the season.

Additionally, whereas other *Speyeria* species, e.g. *S. aphrodite*, *S. hesperis*, *S. edwardsii*, and *S. mormonia* were present in both mesic and xeric sites, only *S. a. pahasapa* appeared to require mesic sites with running water, or at the very least, a damp creekbed. This is consistent with unpublished observations by S. M. Spomer of a closely-related butterfly, *S. atlantis hollandii*, in the Riding Mountains of Manitoba, Canada. There, *S. atlantis* is found only in the cool, wet coniferous forests, while *S. hesperis dennisii* is found in more xeric habitats, although in some instances the butterflies are sympatric.

Conservation Recommendations

Spring Creek, along FS Road 306

Everywhere we stopped along Spring Creek we found *S. a. pahasapa*. This may be the largest metapopulation of *S. a. pahasapa* in the Black Hills. Conditions are ideal and apparently undisturbed. Management regimes, if any are currently used, should be maintained.

Upper French Creek

Of all the areas visited where *S. a. pahasapa* was present, the Upper French Creek site appeared the most vulnerable and warrants the most attention regarding site preservation. At this site, a small oxbow of habitat exists, possibly less than one square mile. On either side of the site, habitat quality diminished significantly. More tall grass was present and wild flowers (nectar sources) were absent. In addition, cattle were present at this site and may pose a serious threat to the overall health of the site. Excluding cattle (or very limited grazing) from this small refugium will be an important recommendation to conserving the fitness of this site and maintaining a population of *S. a. pahasapa*. In addition, putting the site on a regular (3-5 year?) burn schedule may promote adequate nectar sources.

Estes Creek

This site held a small population of *S. a. pahasapa*, and oddly enough, this was the only *Speyeria* present. Another wet meadow species, the Silver-bordered fritillary, *Boloria selene*, was also present here, indicating the presence of violets, the larval host of both

species of butterflies. The narrow width of Estes Creek may make the adjacent wetlands near the creek prone to drying out, possibly endangering the violet hosts. Also, if snowfall and subsequent melting is insufficient to maintain a steady flow of water here (unless the creek is spring fed), the site may be imperiled. This site should be monitored on a frequent basis.

George S. Mickelson Trail

Populations of *S. a. pahasapa* were evident at various sites along this trail, which runs N to S over a large area of the Black Hills. Additionally, other populations probably exist further off the trail where access is limited or land is privately owned. This 100+ mile trail, which encompasses diverse habitat types, with flowing water and ample nectar sources, will probably act as a refugium for *S. a. pahasapa*. Management strategies already in place for the trail should be upheld to maintain suitable habitat for Black Hills butterflies, including *S. a. pahasapa*.

Future Research

Although this survey identified many new sites for *S. a. pahasapa*, most of these sites are in Pennington and Lawrence Counties. Additional colonies of *S. a. pahasapa* should be searched for in Custer County, and potential sites with spring-fed springs in Fall River County should be searched. In general, however, the southern Black Hills counties (Fall River, Custer) and the NW extension of the Black Hills into Wyoming (Crook Co.) appear to be too dry and hot to support viable populations.

References

- Marrone, Gary M. 2002. Field guide to butterflies of South Dakota. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, Pierre. 478 pp.
- Scott, James A., Norbert G. Kondla, and Stephen M. Spomer. 1998. *Speyeria hesperis* and *Speyeria atlantis* are distinct species. *Papilio* (New Series) 8: 1-31.

Appendix 1. Localities visited in July and August, 2005.

14 July 2005

Iron Creek, Custer Co.

Speyeria aphrodite

Speyeria edwardsii

Coenonympha tullia

Polites origenes rhena

Polygonia zephyrus

Vanessa cardui

Habitat was sedgy marsh along the creek, looked like reasonable habitat for *S. a. pahasapa*, but none were seen.

4 Mile Creek, Custer Co.

Overcast, no butterflies seen

This habitat is near where a previous record of *S. a. pahasapa* existed.

15 July 2005

George S. Mickelson Trail, along Hwy. 16, Pennington Co. SD

N43° 53.071' W103° 35.685'

Speyeria hesperis lurana

Phyciodes cocyta

Speyeria edwardsii

Vanessa cardui

Pieris rapae

Coenonympha tullia

Limenitis weidemeyerii

Papilio canadensis

Pholisora catullus

Colias philodice

Speyeria mormonia

Boloria selene

Hyles euphorbiae- 3 larvae on leafy spurge (first SD record)

This site was a nice site along the creek with ample nectar sources. It looked ideal for *S. a. pahasapa*, but none were seen.

FS Road 306, along Spring Creek, not far from Hwy. 16, 5140' elev., N43° 51.814' W103° 37.720', Pennington Co. SD (Site 1)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- ca. 20 seen, incl. 1 female; outnumbered *S. h. lurana*

Speyeria edwardsii

Speyeria hesperis lurana

Satyrium titus

Papilio canadensis

Polygonia zephyrus

Coenonympha tullia

Limenitis weidemeyerii

Nice habitat along the creek, interspersed with willows, etc. Nectar sources were common milkweed, and *Monarda*.

FS Road 306, along Spring Creek, N43° 51.977' W103° 39.043', Pennington Co. SD (Site 2)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- common, ca. 10 males seen

Speyeria aphrodite- 1 male seen

Speyeria hesperis lurana- common

Colias christina krauthii- several seen

Similar habitat as previous site.

Meadow, N43° 53.302' W103° 40.591', 5639' elev., Pennington Co. SD (Site 3)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa-1 male

Habitat was dry meadow with a temporal (but dry) creek. Atypical habitat for *S. a. pahasapa*, so lone male was possibly a stray.

Spring Creek to Negro Creek, wet sedgy meadow, N43° 53.861' W103°41.323', 5639' elev., Pennington Co. SD (Site 4)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- common, ca. 20-30 seen

Speyeria mormonia

Speyeria edwardsii

Colias christina krauthii

Plebejus saepiolus

Negro Creek, FS Road 297, N43° 54.210' W103° 42.012', 5675' elev., Pennington Co. SD (Site 5)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 10 males seen

Ditch Creek, FS Road 291, near Ditch Creek Campground, Pennington Co. SD (Site 6)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 5 males seen

Colias christina krauthii

Parnassius phoebus (=smintheus)

This was the site of a previous record for *S. a. pahasapa* along Ditch Creek.

W end of Deerfield Reservoir, Pennington Co. SD (Site 7)

Junonia coenia- 1 seen

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- ca. 20-30 seen, incl. 2 females

This is the type locality for *S. a. pahasapa*. Other records near this site include Castle Creek to the NW (FS Road 110) and Nichols Creek to the W (FS Road 294).

Black Fox CG road, N44° 07.713' W103 °53.249', 6090' elev., Lawrence Co. SD (Site 8)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 1 female seen

Speyeria hesperis lurana- ca. 100 seen on *Rudbeckia*

Colias christina krauthii

Polygonia zephyrus

Plebejus saepiolus

Vanessa atalanta

This habitat was a small meadow along the roadside with a profuse number of *Rudbeckia* in bloom. Also, butterflies were nectaring on small white flowers and *Monarda*.

Rapid Creek, FS Road 231, N44° 08.997' W103° 49.804', 5622' elev., Lawrence Co. SD (Site 9)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 2 males seen

16 July 2005

Fawn Creek, FS Road 832, Crook Co. WY

Speyeria aphrodite

Creek seemed, or was probably too dry, for *S. a. pahasapa*.

Cook Lake campground, FS Road 842, Crook Co. WY

Speyeria aphrodite

Speyeria edwardsii

Habitat was too dry.

Hills N of Warren Peak, FS Road 838, Crook Co. WY

Parnassius phoebus (= *Parnassius smintheus*)- common

Pontia occidentalis

Speyeria edwardsii

Speyeria aphrodite

Speyeria mormonia

Speyeria callippe- several, worn

Habitat was dry, rocky, prairie hilltops with thistles along roadside.

Ranch A, 6 mi. S of Beulah, Cold Springs Creek, Crook Co. WY

Habitat was swales along creek with water. Common milkweed was the only nectar source available. No fritillaries were seen. We believed this to be the site of a previous record of *S. a. pahasapa*, but later inquiries placed the actual site along FS Road 864, slightly to the east of this site.

Rattlesnake Canyon, FS Road 804, Lawrence Co. SD

Speyeria hesperis lurana

No water in creek; probably too dry here for *S. a. pahasapa*.

Timon Campground, Lawrence Co. (Site 10)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 3 males seen on *Monarda*

Colias christina krauthii- 2 females seen along trail

Limnitis weidemeyerii

Trail along Little Spearfish Creek, north of campground. This was a previously-known site for *S. a. pahasapa*.

Iron Creek, FS Road 222, Lawrence Co. SD

Pontia occidentalis- common

Coenonympha tullia- several seen

Phyciodes cocyta

Habitat looked good for *S. a. pahasapa*, but it was getting cloudy and it was late in the day. This site was about two miles west of a previously-known record for *S. a. pahasapa*.

17 July 2005

Dalton Creek, FS Road 224, N44° 14.776' W103° 30.998', 4696' elev., Lawrence Co. SD (Site 11)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 15-20 seen, incl. 1 female

Phyciodes batesii lakotah- 1 female

Habitat was small sunny meadows or openings along Dalton Creek, with marshy habitat and good nectar sources. Violets (two species) were seen along the creek where *S. a. pahasapa* was observed. Gary Marrone (personal communication) had collected a male *S. a. pahasapa* at Dalton Lake two weeks earlier, and Dalton Lake is mentioned in his book (Marrone 2002).

Boxelder Forks Campground, N44° 11.711' W103° 31.252', 4565' elev., Lawrence Co. SD (Site 12)

Speyeria hesperis lurana

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 1 male seen

Boloria selene

Speyeria edwardsii

Phyciodes batesii lakotah- 1 female

Epargyreus clarus

Habitat was forest openings along Boxelder Creek. Few nectar sources were seen, mostly thistles.

South Boxelder Walk-In Fishery, N44° 11.844' W103° 32.534', 4679' elev., Lawrence Co. SD (Site 13)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 15-20 seen

Speyeria hesperis lurana

Boloria selene

Open marshy habitat along creek with thistles and *Monarda*. About equal numbers of *S. h. lurana* and *S. a. pahasapa* were seen. One female *S. h. lurana* was posturing (showing readiness for mating) and a male *S. a. pahasapa* flew by and ignored her.

Steamboat Rock Picnic Grounds, Lawrence Co. SD

Speyeria hesperis lurana- only 2 females seen

Habitat looked good for *S. a. pahasapa*, but few butterflies were seen. One *S. h. lurana* was fully silvered (a rarity for this typically-unsilvered species).

Estes Creek, FS Road 208, N44° 10.243' W103° 29.819', 4481' elev., Lawrence Co. SD (Site 14)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 6 males seen

Phyciodes cocyta- 1 female seen

Boloria selene- several seen

This site was not particularly good-looking. There was constant water flowing, but only a small trickle. There were quite a few nectar sources, including buckbrush (*Symphoricarpos* sp.), *Monarda*, alfalfa, and red clover. Oddly, no *S. hesperis lurana* were observed here.

Pilot Knob, FS Road 208, Lawrence Co. SD

Looked good, but no fritillaries seen. It was fairly late in the day, however.

Roubaix Lake Campground, Lawrence Co. SD

Phyciodes cocyta- 1 female seen

Looked like great habitat, but no fritillaries were seen. It may have possibly been too late in the day.

3 August 2005

Beaver Creek, FS Road 336, outside of Wind Cave NP, Custer Co. SD

Speyeria mormonia- common

Speyeria aphrodite- few

Speyeria edwardsii- common

Habitat was a continuously-flowing creek with narrow, adjacent sedge wetlands. Some willows present. Dry, upland grasslands away from the creek with woody species, e.g. box elder, plum, chokecherry present. Nectar source here was *Monarda*.

Lightning Creek, FS Road 288, Custer Co. SD

Speyeria mormonia- few

Speyeria edwardsii- few

Creek was dry and habitat was inappropriate for *S. a. pahasapa*

Upper French Creek, FS Road 286, 2 mi. NNW off Hwy. 16, Custer Co. SD (Site 15)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- common, 15 females, 2 males

Speyeria hesperis lurana- 3 females, 4 males

Speyeria mormonia- 1 female

Speyeria aphrodite- 2 females, 2 males

Speyeria edwardsii- 3 females

Polygonia zephyrus

Nymphalis milberti

Limenitis weidemeyerii

Papilio canadensis

Cercyonis oetus

Papilio multicaudatus

Vanessa cardui

Cercyonis pegala
Neophasia menapia
Coenonympha tullia

Habitat was a steep-walled muddy creek bed, but no running water; very tenuous. Violets were present. Nearly all butterflies were nectaring on *Solidago* sp., although *Monarda* and *Cirsium* were present. Evidence of cattle grazing was present and substantial at this site.

4 August 2005

Oreville (Hwy. 385) at George S. Mickelson Trail, Pennington Co. SD (Site 16)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 4 females, 1 male
Speyeria hesperis lurana- >20 females, 12 males
Speyeria edwardsii- 2 females
Vanessa cardui
Limenitis weidemeyerii
Polygonia zephyrus
Pieris rapae
Cercyonis oetus
Cercyonis pegala

Habitat was a marshy area alongside the trail. Nearly all butterflies were nectaring on Canada thistle.

Tenderfoot Creek, Hwy. 385 at George S. Mickelson Trail, Custer Co. (Site 17)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 2 females
Speyeria hesperis lurana- 10 females, 3 males
Euptoiepta claudia
Pieris rapae
Nymphalis milberti
Polygonia zephyrus

Habitat was a marshy area along creek. Butterflies were nectaring on Canada thistle, although *Monarda* was also present.

Battle Creek, FS Road 353, Pennington Co. SD (Site 18)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 2 females, 1 male
Speyeria hesperis lurana- 4 females, 2 males
Speyeria edwardsii- 2 females, 1 male
Cercyonis pegala
Coenonympha tullia
Polygonia zephyrus
Vanessa cardui

Habitat was a narrow corridor of wet area along the creek. Black Hills spruce was present. Some butterflies were nectaring on *Monarda*.

Palmer Creek, FS Road 475, Pennington Co. SD (Site 19)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 1 female, 1 male

Speyeria hesperis lurana- 2 females, 4 males

Limenitis weidemeyerii

Cercyonis oetus

Vanessa cardui

Polygonia zephyrus

Habitat was similar to Battle Creek site.

Horse Spring Creek, FS Road 243, Pennington Co. SD (Site 20)

Speyeria atlantis pahasapa- 1 female

Speyeria hesperis lurana- 2 females, 2 males

Speyeria edwardsii

Speyeria mormonia

Cercyonis pegala

Polygonia zephyrus

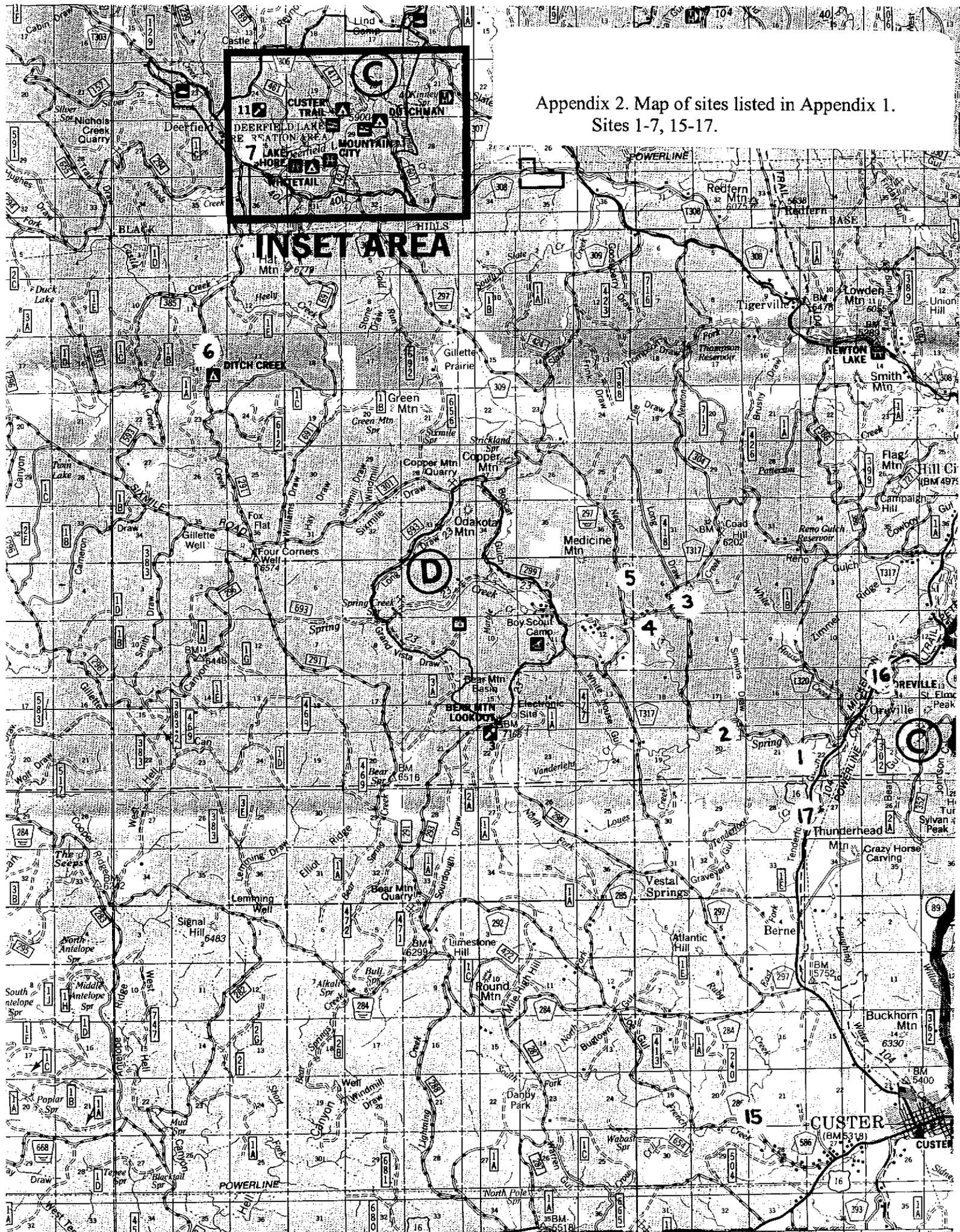
Vanessa atalanta

Vanessa cardui

Habitat was similar to Battle Creek and Palmer Creek sites.

Appendix 2. Map of sites visited in 2005 with confirmed sightings of *S. a. pahasapa*.
Numbers correspond to numbered sites in Appendix 1.

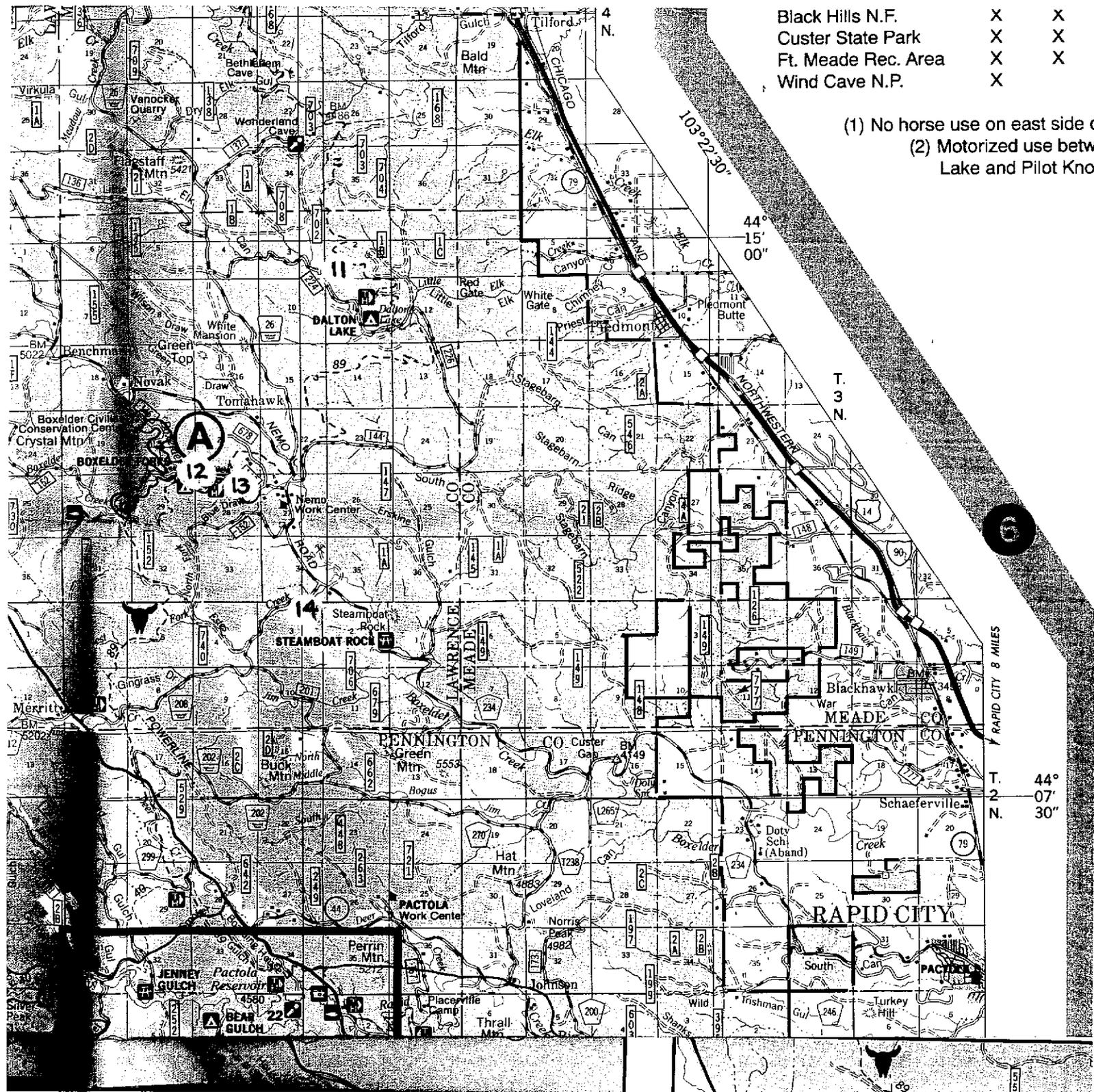
Appendix 2. Map of sites listed in Appendix 1.
Sites 1-7, 15-17.



Appendix 2. Map of sites listed in Appendix 1.
Sites 8-10.



Appendix 2. Map of sites listed in Appendix 1.
Sites 11-14.



Black Hills N.F.	X	X
Custer State Park	X	X
Ft. Meade Rec. Area	X	X
Wind Cave N.P.	X	

- (1) No horse use on east side of
- (2) Motorized use between Lake and Pilot Knob



RAPID CITY 8 MILES

44° 07' 30" N.

Appendix 2. Map of sites listed in Appendix 1.
Sites 18-20.

