

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

Brown Elfin

POST #31—May 26

May is coming to an end and we are just starting to see the first batch of butterflies that have hatched this year! The butterflies covered in Bogdiversity Thursday posts so far have considered butterflies that overwinter as adults. There are, however, a few butterflies that hatch fairly early in our area and today's post features one of those species: Brown Elfin!

Brown Elfin is a fantastic butterfly and a bog specialist species in our area. It's lifecycle revolves around plants in the family Ericaceae. Included in this family are plants like bog rosemary, leatherleaf, Labrador tea, and bog laurel. All of these plants are specialized to grow in bogs. These little brown butterflies have a short flight period: emerging from their chrysalises in mid-May and are usually finished flying in mid-June!

If you have gotten to spend time in a bog watching this species, you probably know how difficult they are to find! Not only do they blend in with their surroundings quite well, but they typically only make short flights and perch quite low to the ground. Males of

this species defend territories and often can be seen chasing other males around.

Brown Elfins nectar on their host plants, but also nectar on blueberry. Right now, blueberries is just beginning to flower, which means over the next few days it should be a great time to view this lovely little butterfly! Gray Jay Way and Owl Avenue north of the Welcome Center are both great places to find this species, especially in areas with abundant host plants and nectar sources.

More information on the photos below!
(Photos of below by Head Naturalist Clinton)



Brown Elfin are bog specialist butterflies, meaning their host plants only grow in bogs! These handsome brown butterflies lack tails and have a gradation of orangish, brownish, and grayish tones.



Labrador Tea is very abundant in the Sax-Zim Bog. This species has yet to start flowering. Brown Elfins lay their eggs on the flower buds of their host plants and their caterpillars eat the flowers and fruits of those plants.



This male is perched ready to defend his territory! Believe it or not, butterflies are quite aggressive when it comes to defending their chosen host plant sites.



Low-bush blueberry has just begun blooming in the Sax-Zim Bog!
This important nectar plant for Brown Elfin can be found in sunny
roadsides and trailsides throughout the Sax-Zim Bog.