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**From the Selected Works of Paul V. Switzer**

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Spring 2019

# Quick and Easy Guide to Common Butterflies: An Introduction to the 25 Most Commonly Encountered Butterflies in the Midwest

Paul V Switzer

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QUICK AND EASY GUIDE TO

# COMMON BUTTERFLIES

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Text and Images by Paul V. Switzer, Ph. D.



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 25 MOST COMMONLY  
ENCOUNTERED BUTTERFLIES IN THE MIDWEST.



# QUICK AND EASY GUIDE TO **COMMON BUTTERFLIES**

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Text and Images by Paul V. Switzer, Ph. D.

This guide, created with the support of Eastern Illinois University, is a critical educational component of the **Urban Butterfly Initiative** ([urbanbutterflies.org](http://urbanbutterflies.org)), a community-service organization that works to integrate butterfly habitat into public and private green spaces in cities.

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Visit [urbanbutterflies.org](http://urbanbutterflies.org)

Pictured on cover – Fiery skipper



Gray comma (left) and question mark (right) getting nutrients from bird feces.

If you are new to butterfly watching, this is the book for you! It covers 25 of the most commonly encountered butterflies in the Midwestern U.S. Learning these common species will give you a great start in your discovery of the more than 100 butterfly species in our region, many of which look very similar to those included in this guide.

For example, if you see what appears to be a gray hairstreak, you can confirm its identification by using the enclosed identification guide. With each account there is a mention of “similar species,” a section that includes a few reasonably common butterflies that may be confused with the pictured species. So if it’s not a gray hairstreak, but it shares common characteristics with any of the butterflies on our list, the identification guide can provide direction on what and where you should be looking – perhaps a more comprehensive field guide.

I have also provided photos of additional common species, besides the original 25, near the back of the book. As with the guide itself, these similar species are not an exhaustive list.

Lastly, I have included examples of more comprehensive field guides, online resources for identification, a listing of butterfly-related organizations, and citizen science initiatives near the back of this book. So if you see a butterfly that looks different than one of our 25, you will already know where to start looking for its identification.



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# PLANTING FOR BUTTERFLIES

Butterfly presence requires proper food plants for caterpillars and adults. These plants can be easily incorporated into yards, parks, and other open areas. The best plants to use are those native to your area. Native plants are better adapted to survive, provide resources for the most native animals, and are less likely to become a problem if they escape the garden area. That said, careful use of some nonnative plants can provide useful resources for many butterflies if you make sure these plants are not potential invasive species.

## THREE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CHOOSING YOUR PLANTS

1. When possible, include host plants for caterpillars to help build the local population. The identification section lists some of the host plants for each species.
2. Try to include plants that bloom at different times to provide nectar all year long.
3. Choose plants that have varying sizes, shapes, and flower colors to match the preferences exhibited by different species. As a bonus, by providing these nectar sources for butterflies, you will also be supporting other pollinators!

Many books and websites have extensive information on plant choice and garden design. I've listed a few such resources at the back of this guide.



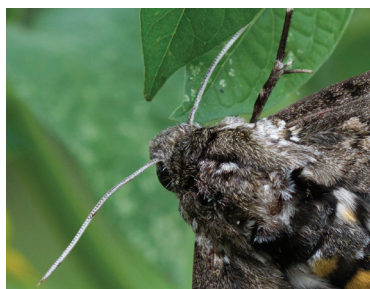
Variegated fritillary on  
butterfly milkweed



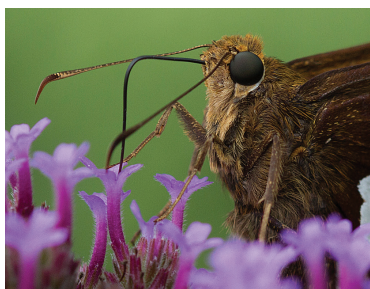
Pipevine swallowtail on  
purple coneflower



Common buckeye butterfly



Carolina sphinx moth



Silver-spotted skipper butterfly

## BUTTERFLIES VS. MOTHS

Both butterflies and moths are in the insect order Lepidoptera (“scale wing”), a name that refers to the powdery scales present on their wings. There are many more species of moths than butterflies, but butterflies are usually more conspicuous, especially during the day. One key that distinguishes moths, butterflies, and skipper butterflies from one another is the shape of the antennae. Moths have either thread-like or feathery antennae. Butterflies have thin antennae with knobs at the end. Skipper butterflies have thin antennae with a “hockey-stick” like crooked knob at the end.







Eastern commas, pearl crescents, red-spotted purples, and a question mark puddling on a gravel road.

## BUTTERFLY FEEDERS AND PUDDLING

As you'll see in this guide, not all butterflies feed on nectar from flowers. Some will feed on decaying fruit, sap, and even feces or animal carcasses. Males of some species that prefer flowers may still get other nutrients (particularly salts) by "puddling;" sucking fluids from wet sand, mud, or gravel, that they then use for reproduction. They may even land on you to enjoy the salts in your sweat!

For the fruit and sap feeders, you can provide rotten fruit at a feeder to bring these species up close for observation. Most of these species live in or near forests, so if you have trees nearby, you may be able to attract them with a fruit feeder. Melons, bananas, and apples are good fruits to try.



# MIMICRY IN BUTTERFLIES

In this guide, we have examples of the two main types of mimicry: Batesian and Müllerian.

In Batesian mimicry, there is a toxic species that is mimicked by palatable (nontoxic) species. In our butterflies, the toxic species is the pipevine swallowtail, which gains poisonous chemicals from its *Aristolochia* sp. host plant and uses those toxins to protect itself as a caterpillar and adult. The black swallowtail, spicebush swallowtail, dark form of the female eastern tiger swallowtail, and red-spotted purple are all nontoxic species that gain protection by looking like the pipevine through Batesian mimicry.

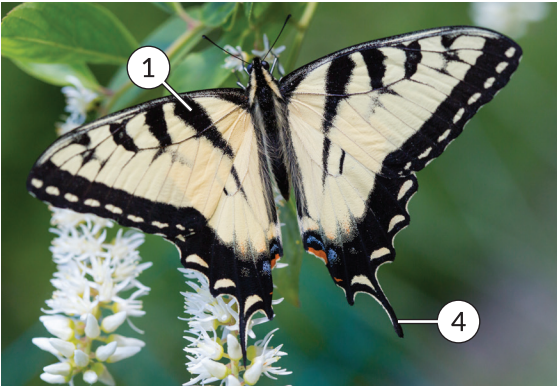
In Müllerian mimicry, two or more toxic species gain an advantage by looking like each other, reinforcing the avoidance behavior of their predators. In our species, the monarch and viceroy are both toxic and have the same appearance, and so gain an advantage through Müllerian mimicry.

Interestingly, the red-spotted purple and viceroy are closely related and yet have evolved different types of mimicry.



# EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL

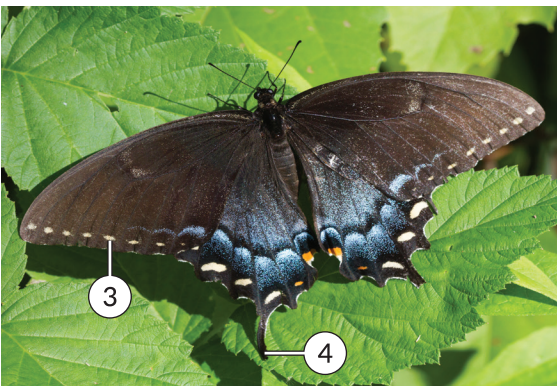
*Papilio glaucus*



Male



Yellow-form female



Dark-form female

## SIZE

Large (5 in/13 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Black stripes on yellow background
2. Yellow-form female – Blue scales on hindwing
3. Dark-form female – Dashes (not dots) on edge of wing and no white marks on body, faint tiger stripes are often visible
4. Tails on hindwings

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Many trees including tulip poplar and black cherry

## SIMILAR SPECIES

- Male – Zebra swallowtail (*Eurytides marcellus*)
- Dark-form female – Other pipevine swallowtail mimics (see p. 16)

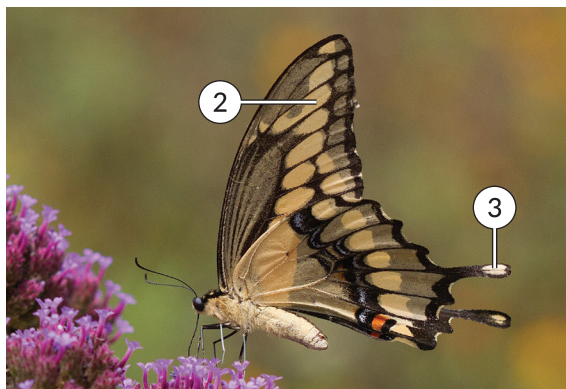
## ID TIPS

The tiger-striped pattern is distinctive on males. The dark form female can be confused with other pipevine swallowtail mimics.



# GIANT SWALLOWTAIL

*Papilio cresphontes*



## SIZE

Very large (6 in/15 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Large yellow bands on brown background on topside, band forms a continuous stripe across the top of both wings when open
2. Mostly yellow on underside, with brown band
3. Tails on hindwings

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Citrus relatives including wafer ash, prickly ash, and rue

## SIMILAR SPECIES

None

## ID TIPS

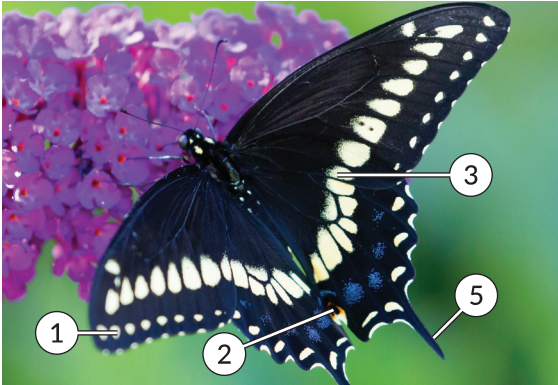
Slow wing beats and bold, brown and yellow pattern help ID in flight

## DID YOU KNOW?

The giant swallowtail is the largest butterfly in North America.

# BLACK SWALLOWTAIL

*Papilio polyxenes*



Male



Female



## SIZE

Large (4.25 in/10 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Yellow and white spots on black background
2. Orange "bull's-eye" mark on inside trailing edge of hindwing
3. Male – Yellow band on topside
4. Two rows of orange spots on underside of hindwing, with a pair of orange spots in the middle of the inside row
5. Tails on hindwings

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Rue and plants in the carrot family, including golden Alexander, parsley, dill, and Queen Anne's lace

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other pipevine swallowtail mimics (see p. 16)

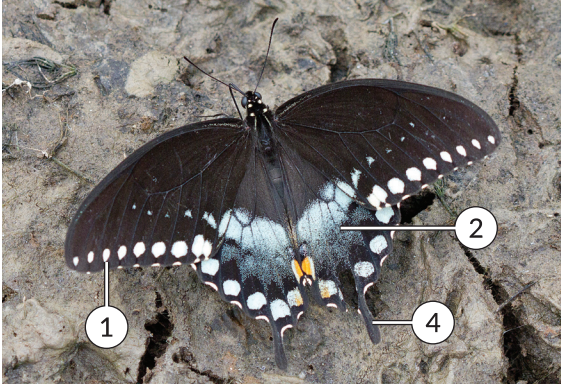
## ID TIPS

- The yellow band on the male is key.
- On both sexes, look for the bull's-eye mark on the hindwing, and the double orange spot on the underside.

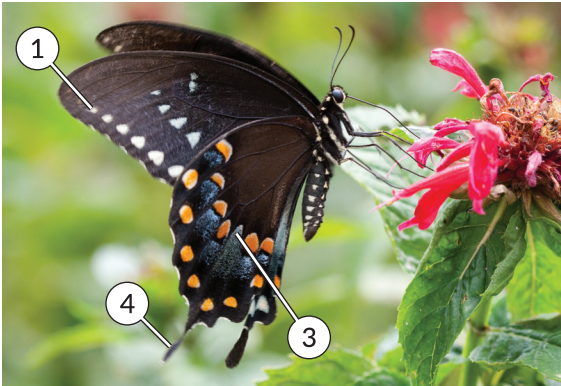


# SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL

*Papilio troilus*



Male



Male

## SIZE

Large (4.25 in/11 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. White spots on a black background
2. Blue on topside of hindwing, with crescent shaped blue marks on edge (with a bright band across the middle of the hindwing in males)
3. Double row of orange spots on underside of hindwing, with one of the orange spots replaced with a blue "comet-shaped" mark in the inside row
4. Tails on hindwings

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Spicebush and sassafras

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other pipevine swallowtail mimics (see p. 16)

## ID TIPS

The comet mark on the hindwing is key.

# PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL

*Battus philenor*

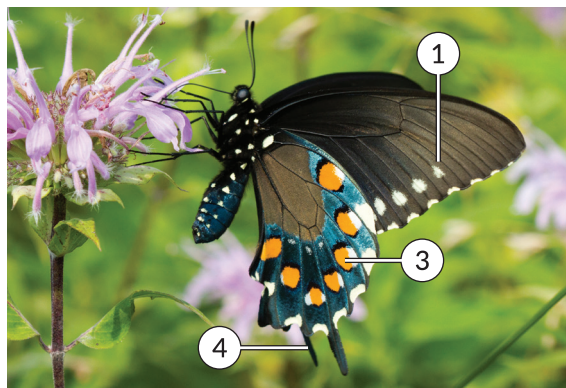


## SIZE

Large (4.5 in/11.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Small white dots on black background
2. Iridescent blue/green on topside hindwing
3. Single row of large orange spots in a "C" shape on underside hindwing
4. Tails on hindwings



## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

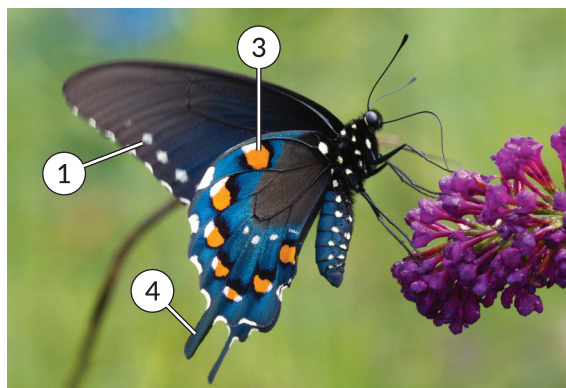
Pipevine (*Aristolochia* sp.), including wooly pipevine and Virginia snakeroot

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Several common mimics (see p. 16)

## ID TIPS

The blue color on the topside is iridescent. They often look all black when flying, with flashes of blue when the light catches their wings at the correct angle.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Pipevine swallowtails are the distasteful model for the other large, black butterflies in our area.

# LARGE BLACK BUTTERFLY ID

Because of their effective mimicry, distinguishing the large black butterflies can be tricky. Here are some side-by-side photos and key identification tips to help tell them apart.

## FOCUS ON

- Body – With spots or plain black
- Topside – Blue (iridescence or scales) and shape of white marks on the edge of wings
- Underside – Number and location of orange spots

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES ON TOPSIDE

### PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL

It has blue or green iridescence evenly spread on its hindwings, including tails. It may appear all black in some light.

### FEMALE BLACK SWALLOWTAIL

It has small white spots on the edges of its wing, often with a white spot at the front edge of the forewing, and an orange “bullseye” mark on the edge of the hindwing.

### SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL

It has crescent shaped white or light blue spots and blue scales on its hindwings. Males have a distinct blue stripe through the middle of the wing.

### FEMALE EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL

It has white dashes instead of spots along the edge of its forewing. The white spots on edge of hindwing often have a little orange in them. Faint tiger stripes are sometimes visible.

### RED-SPOTTED PURPLE

It has no tails and a double row of blue marks on the trailing edge of hindwing with a black line above them. Small orange spots are often present on the edge of the forewing.

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES ON UNDERSIDE

### PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL

It has a single row of large orange spots.

### FEMALE BLACK SWALLOWTAIL

It has a double row of orange spots, with one double orange spot in the inner row.

### SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL

It has a double row of orange spots, with a blue “comet-shaped” mark replacing one orange spot in the inner row.

### FEMALE EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL

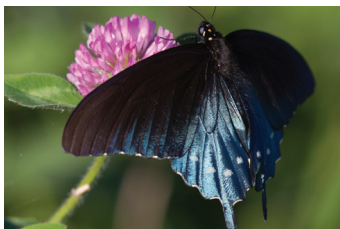
It only has orange spots along the edge of its wings, with an all black body (and no white spots). Faint tiger stripes are sometimes visible on wings.

### RED-SPOTTED PURPLE

It has no tails and orange spots in an irregular pattern close to the body along edge of its wings.



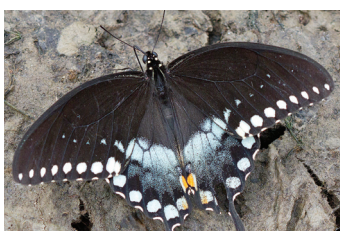
## TOPSIDE



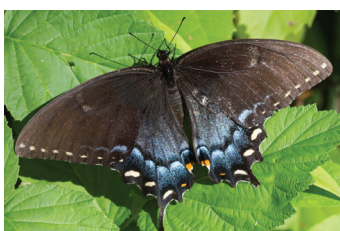
Pipevine swallowtail



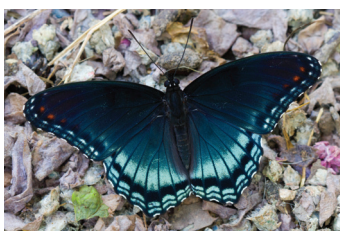
Black swallowtail



Spicebush swallowtail



Eastern tiger swallowtail  
(Dark-form female)

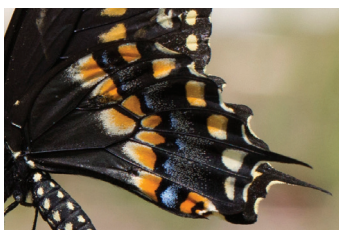


Red-spotted purple

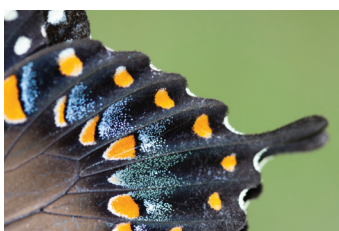
## UNDERSIDE



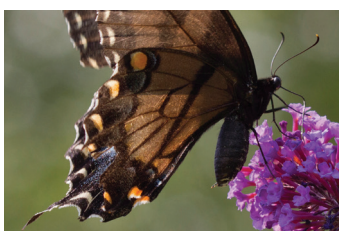
Pipevine swallowtail



Black swallowtail



Spicebush swallowtail



Eastern tiger swallowtail  
(Dark-form female)

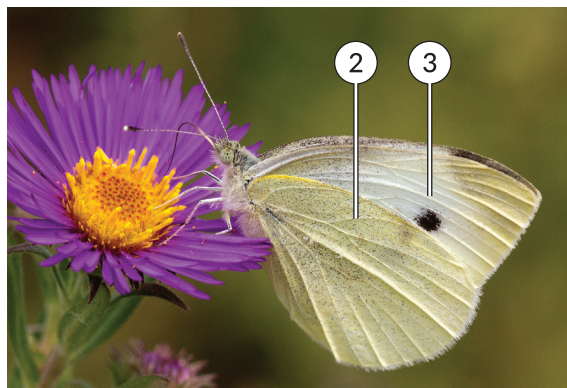
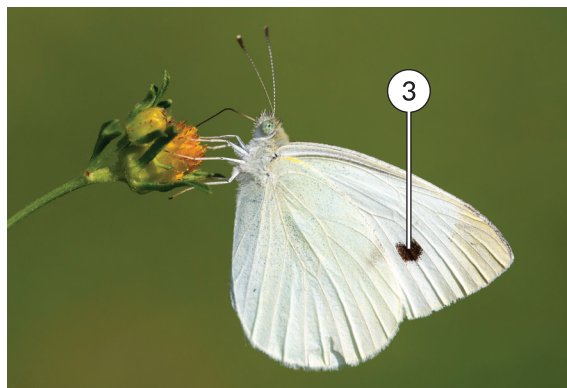
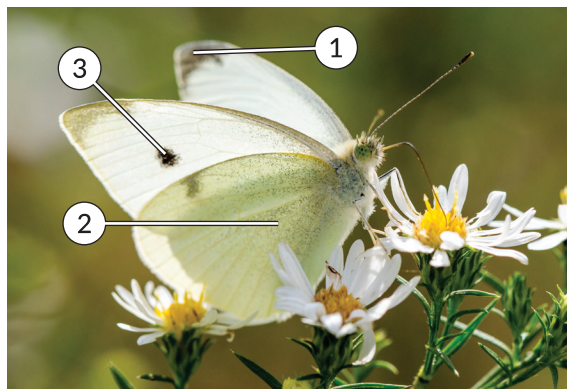


Red-spotted purple



# CABBAGE WHITE

*Pieris rapae*



## SIZE

Medium-small (2.25 in/6 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Bright white topside, often with black wing tips on forewing
2. Dusting of gray often occurs on underside of hindwing
3. Male – One dot on forewing, Female – Two dots on forewing (sex unclear in these photos)

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Many plants in the mustard family (*Brassicaceae*) including cabbage and broccoli

## SIMILAR SPECIES

White-form female orange and clouded sulphurs

## ID TIPS

White-form female orange and clouded sulphurs have a border around the upper side of their wings, instead of just the wing tips. Also, they aren't as bright white.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The cabbage white is native to Eurasia.

# ORANGE SULPHUR

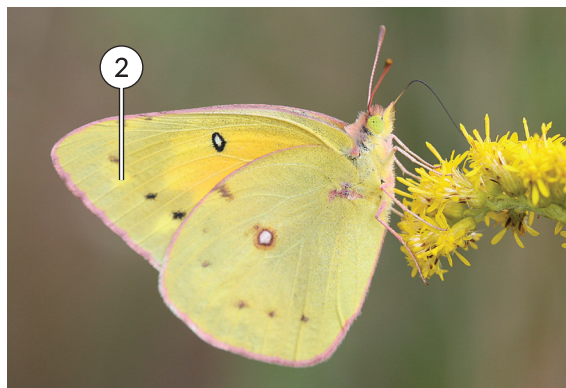
*Colias eurytheme*



Male



Female



Female

## SIZE

Medium-small (2.5 in/6.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Yellow-orange on topside with black borders (females sometimes white)
2. Female – Yellow dots in black border on topside, sometimes visible through underside of forewing (as seen in photos)

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Legumes such as clover and alfalfa

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other sulphurs, especially clouded sulphur

## ID TIPS

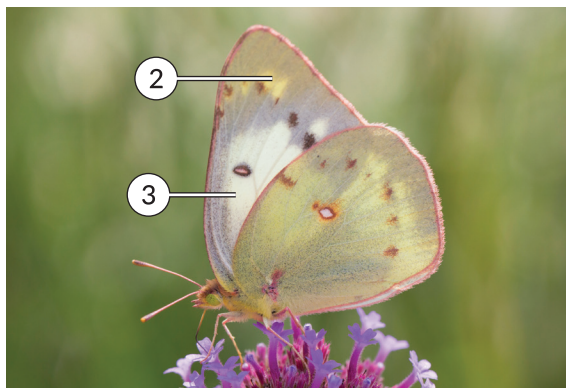
Look for any hint of orange, rather than clear butter yellow, to distinguish between an orange sulphur and a clouded sulphur.

## DID YOU KNOW?

White-form orange and clouded sulphur females cannot be reliably distinguished from each other.

# CLOUDED SULPHUR

*Colias philodice*



White form female

## SIZE

Medium-small (2.5 in/6.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Clear yellow with black border on topside
2. Female – Yellow dots in black border on topside, sometimes visible through underside of wing (as seen in photo)
3. Female – Sometimes white

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Legumes including clover and alfalfa

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other sulphurs, especially orange sulphur

## ID TIPS

Look for any hint of orange, rather than clear yellow, to distinguish between an orange sulphur and a clouded sulphur.

## DID YOU KNOW?

White-form orange and clouded sulphur females cannot be reliably distinguished from each other.

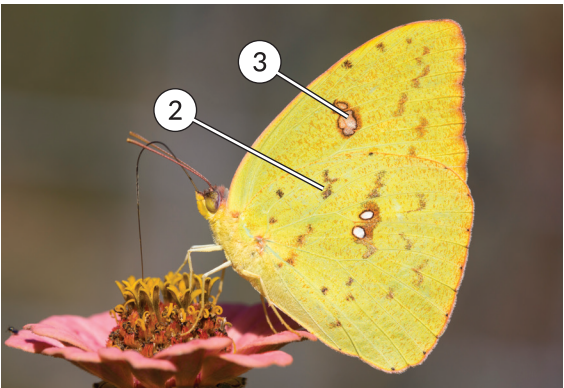


# CLOUDLESS SULPHUR

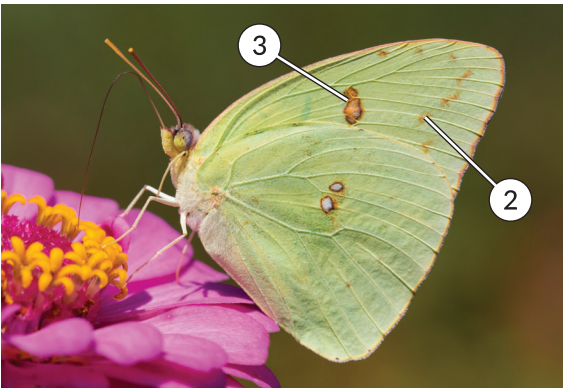
*Phoebis sennae*



Male



Female



Female

## SIZE

Medium (3 in/7.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Male – Bright greenish-yellow on topside, and clear bright-yellow on underside with fewer spots than females
2. Female – Reddish markings on underside
3. Female – Sizable oval mark on forewing

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Legumes including wild senna

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other sulphurs

## ID TIPS

Its large size and very bright yellow color without black edges topside are key identifiers.

# EASTERN TAILED-BLUE

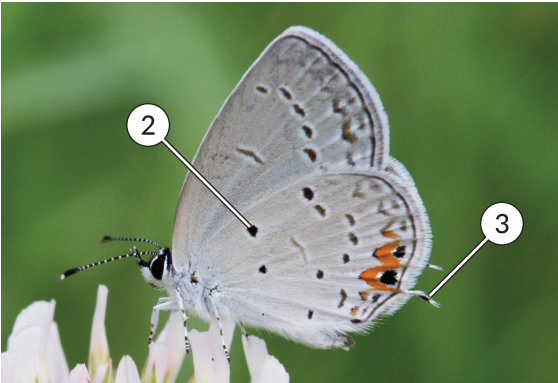
*Cupido comyntas*



Male



Female



## SIZE

Small (1 in/2.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Male – Bright blue on topside, Female - Gray on topside
2. Series of black marks on silver background on underside
3. Orange spots and tail on hindwing

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Legumes including clover

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Spring/summer azure (*Celastrina* sp.), gray hairstreak

## ID TIPS

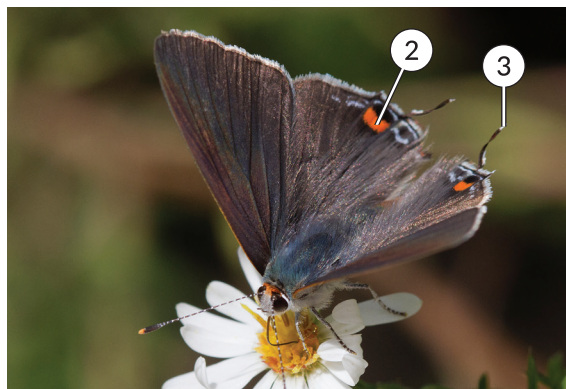
Usually flies very low to the ground. Look for the small orange spot and tails on the hindwing, although tails may be gone in older butterflies.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The eastern tailed-blue is one of our most common butterflies, but often overlooked because of its small size.

# GRAY HAIRSTREAK

*Strymon melinus*



## SIZE

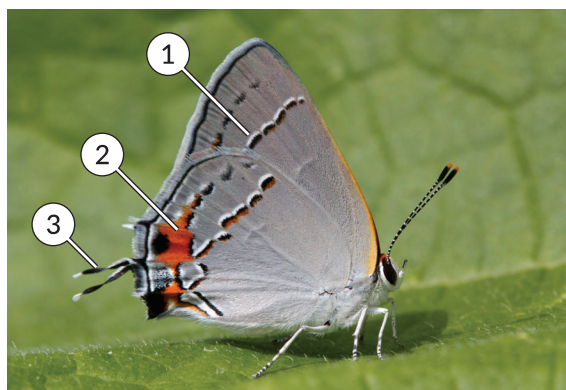
Small (1.25 in/3 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Clear gray underneath with orange and white-bordered black lines
2. Orange spot on hindwing
3. Tails on hindwing

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers



## CATERPILLAR HOST

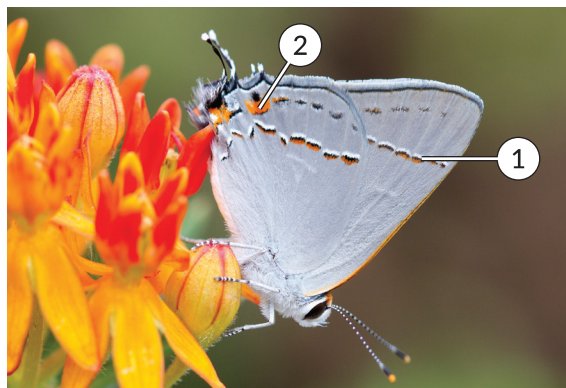
Many plants including clovers, beans and mallows

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Eastern tailed-blue, other hairstreaks

## ID TIPS

Its clear gray color and few lines help distinguish it from the eastern tailed-blue.



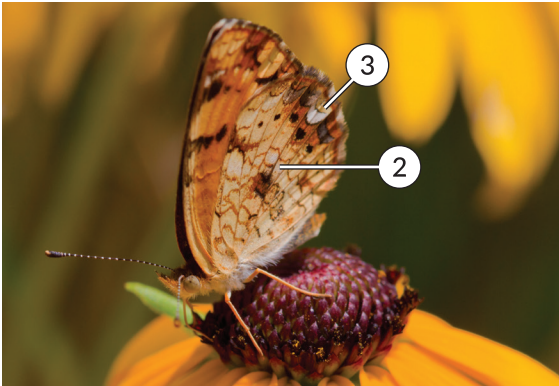
## DID YOU KNOW?

Compared to eastern tailed-blue, the gray hairstreak flies faster and tends to remain on individual flowers longer before moving.



# PEARL CRESCENT

*Phyciodes tharos*



## SIZE

Small (1.5 in/3.8 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Orange with many black and brown spots and lines
2. Lighter, with brown lines on underside
3. Small white crescent on trailing edge on underside of hindwing

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Asters

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other crescents (*Phyciodes* sp.) and checkerspot, such as the silvery checkerspot (*Chlosyne nycteis*)

## ID TIPS

The pearl crescent flies low to the ground.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The pearl crescent is one of our most common butterflies. The amount of brown on the top and underside of the wings can be quite variable.

# GREAT SPANGLED FRITILLARY

*Speyeria cybele*

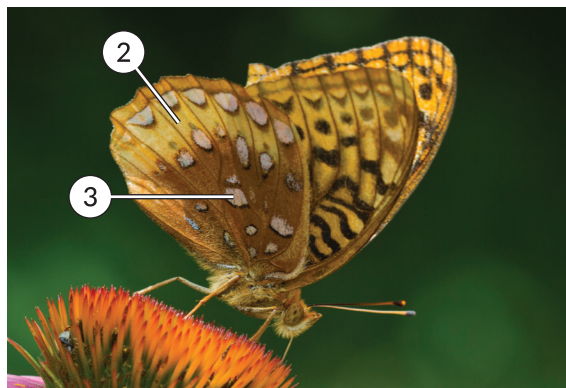


## SIZE

Medium-large (4 in/10 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Bright orange and brown on topside with irregular black lines and spots
2. Orange and brown on underside with wide light-colored band
3. Scattered light-colored spots on underside of hindwing



## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

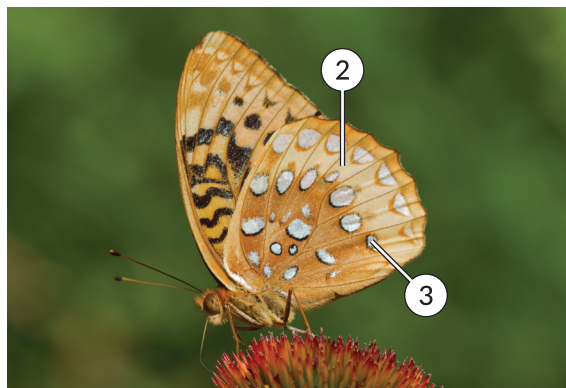
Violets

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Aphrodite fritillary (*Speyeria aphrodite*), variegated fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*)

## ID TIPS

Look for the large body size and wide light-colored band underneath its hindwings to help distinguish this pretty butterfly from similar species.



# PAINTED LADY

*Vanessa cardui*



## SIZE

Medium (3 in/7.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Orange with black markings
2. White spots on wing tips
3. Pink on underside of forewing
4. Four to five small eye spots in a lacework of white and brown on underside of hindwing

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Many plants including thistles, legumes, and mallows

## SIMILAR SPECIES

American lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*)

## ID TIPS

Look for the orange color on the topside and the eye spots on the underside. The American lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) has fewer, but larger, eyespots, and a more plain orange topside with a small bright white dot in the middle of the forewing.

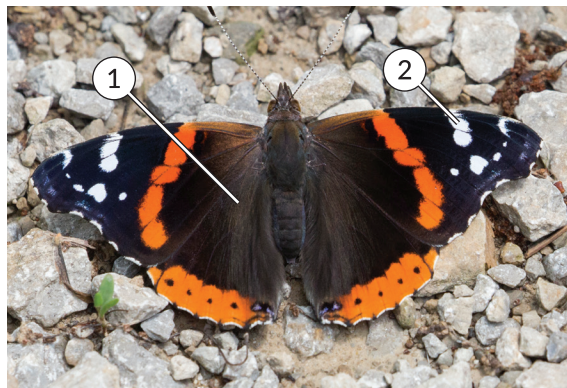
## DID YOU KNOW?

The painted lady is a migrant that can be abundant some years and uncommon in other years.



# RED ADMIRAL

*Vanessa atalanta*



## SIZE

Medium (3 in/7.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Dark brown on topside with bright orange bands on wings
2. White spots on wing tips
3. Pink band on underside of forewing

## ADULT FEEDING

Fruit, sap and flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

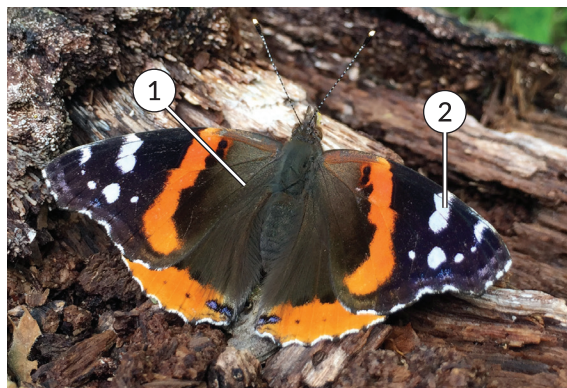
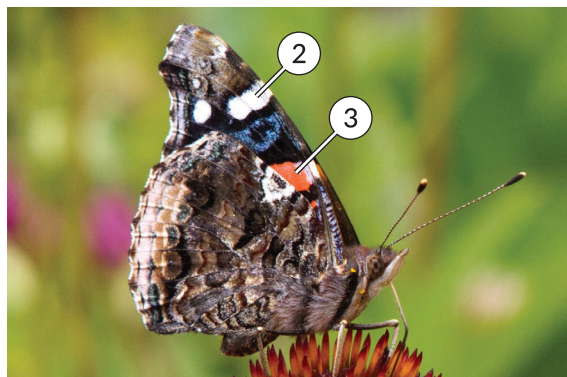
Nettles

## SIMILAR SPECIES

None (The orange bands on its dark brown wings are distinctive.)

## ID TIPS

Look for the orange bands on its topside.

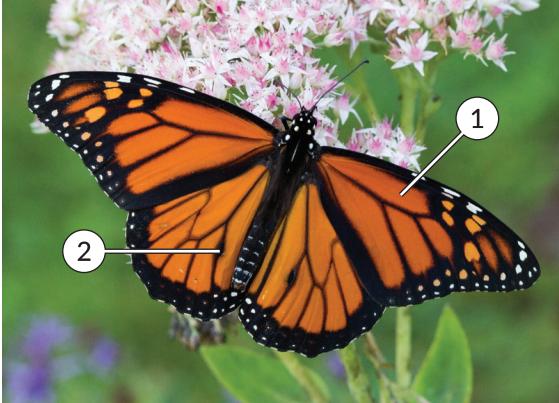


## DID YOU KNOW?

The red admiral often defends territories in late afternoon, aggressively chasing away other butterflies in the area.

# MONARCH

*Danaus plexippus*



Male



Female



## SIZE

Large (4.5 in/11.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Orange with black veins on topside and underside
2. Male – Black spot in center of hindwing
3. Female – Thicker black wing veins than male

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Milkweeds

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Viceroy

## ID TIPS

Look for the curved black band in the middle of the hindwing that is present in viceroys but not monarchs.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The monarch is most commonly found in the Midwest in late summer, as the last generation migrates to Mexico for the winter.

# VICEROY

*Limenitis archippus*



## SIZE

Medium (3.5 in/9 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Orange with black lines
2. Curved black line through hindwing on topside and underside

## ADULT FEEDING

Fruit, sap and flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Willows, cottonwood

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Monarch

## ID TIPS

Look for the curved black line on hindwing.



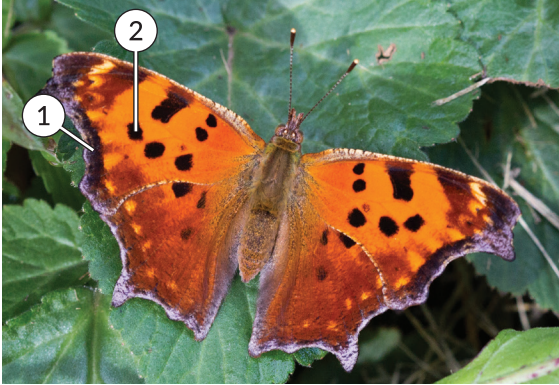
## DID YOU KNOW?

The viceroy and monarch are both distasteful to predators.



# EASTERN COMMA

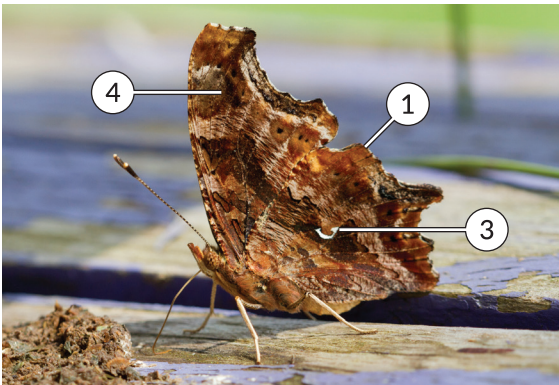
*Polytonia comma*



Fall form



Summer form



## SIZE

Medium-small (2.75 in/7 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Wings with jagged edge, orange with black spots on topside
2. Three spots in a row on topside of forewing with no rectangular spot
3. Silvery comma-shaped mark on underside of hindwing
4. Underside is either mottled brown or evenly brown

## ADULT FEEDING

Fruit and sap

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Nettle, elm, and hops

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Question mark

## ID TIPS

Look for whether it has a fourth, rectangular mark on topside of forewing and comma mark on its underside.

## DID YOU KNOW?

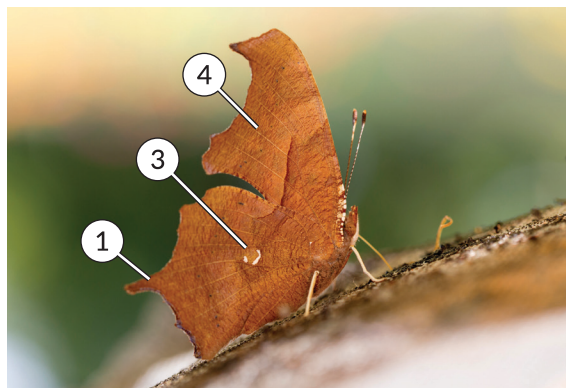
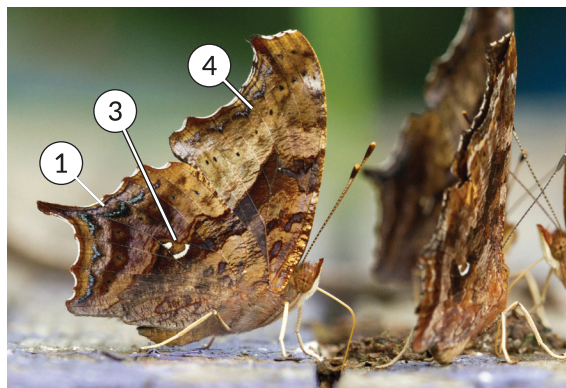
The summer form has brown on top of its hindwings. The fall form has orange on top of its hindwings.

# QUESTION MARK

*Polytonia interrogationis*



Summer form



## SIZE

Medium (3 in/7.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Wings with jagged edge, forewing orange on topside with black spots
2. Four spots in a row on forewing with fourth spot being rectangular
3. Silvery two-part question mark-shaped mark on underside of hindwing
4. Underside is either mottled brown or evenly brown

## ADULT FEEDING

Fruit and sap

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Nettle, hackberry and elm

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Eastern comma

## ID TIPS

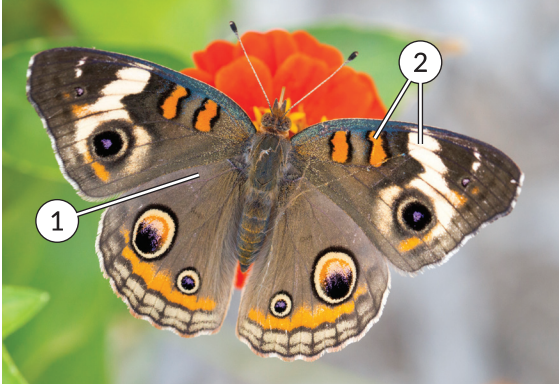
Look for whether it has a fourth, rectangular mark on its topside and a question mark on its underside.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The summer form has brown on top of its hindwings. The fall form has orange on top of its hindwings.

# COMMON BUCKEYE

*Junonia coenia*



## SIZE

Medium-small (2.5 in/6.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Bright orange and brown with large eye spots
2. White and orange bands on topside of forewing
3. Light brown with eye spots and light colored band on underside of forewing



## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

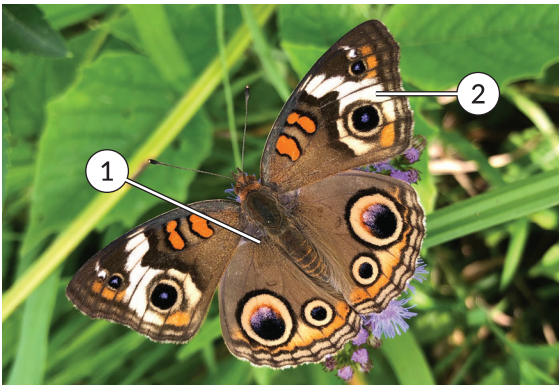
Plantain, snapdragon

## SIMILAR SPECIES

None

## ID TIPS

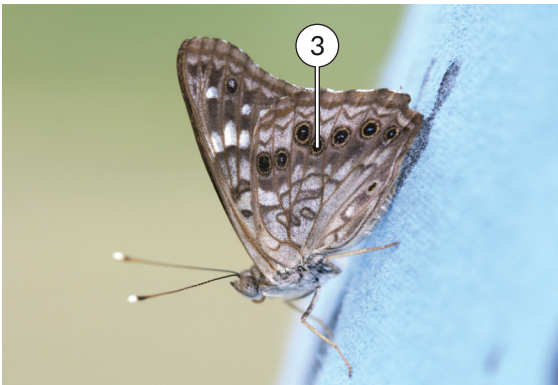
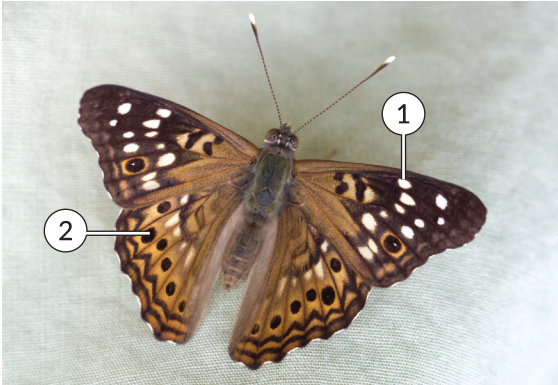
The common buckeye flies low and fast.





# HACKBERRY EMPEROR

*Asterocampa celtis*



## SIZE

Medium-small (2.5 in/6.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Brown on topside, white spots and dark wingtips on forewing
2. Dark spots on hindwing on topside
3. Very light brown on underside with numerous eye spots on edge of wings

## ADULT FEEDING

Fruit and sap

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Hackberry

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Tawny emperor (*Asterocampa clyton*)

## ID TIPS

The tawny emperor is more orange-brown than the hackberry emperor and lacks white spots on its forewing.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The hackberry emperor is a very “friendly” butterfly, which often lands on people to suck sweat off their clothes and skin.

# RED-SPOTTED PURPLE

*Limenitis arthemis astyanax*



## SIZE

Medium (3.5 in/9 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Black with diffuse blue on topside, some small orange spots may be present
2. Scattered large orange spots on underside

## ADULT FEEDING

Fruit, sap and flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Many trees and shrubs including black cherry, willows, and cottonwood

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Other pipevine swallowtail mimics (see p. 16)

## ID TIPS

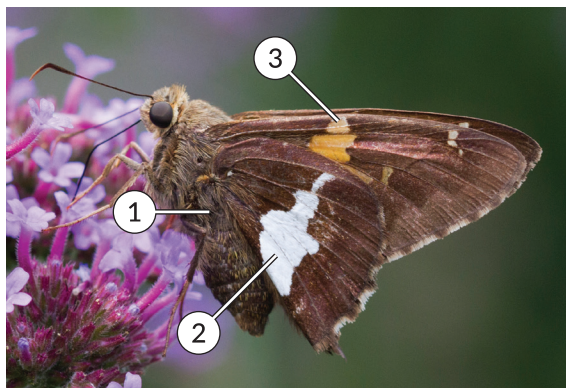
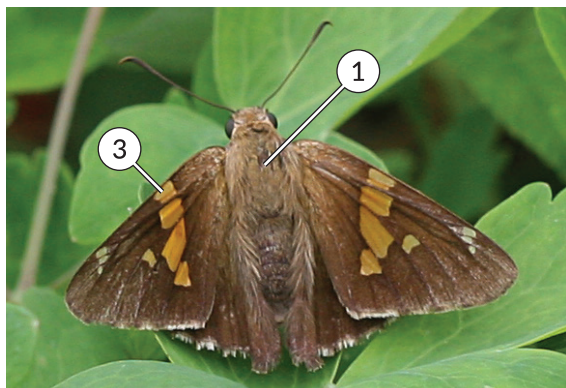
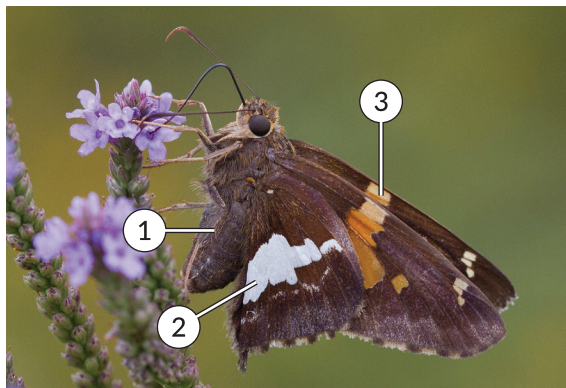
Look for the lack of tails and the scattered orange spots, especially near the base of the underside hindwing.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Based on its appearance, my wife points out that the red-spotted purple should be called "orange-spotted blue." A form in the northern U.S., the white admiral (*Limenitis arthemis arthemis*), has white bands on its wings. Intermediate forms may exist where the two forms come into contact.

# SILVER-SPOTTED SKIPPER

*Epargyreus clarus*



## SIZE

Medium-small (2.5 in/6.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Big body compared to triangular-shaped wings
2. Brown wings with large bright white spot on underside of hindwing
3. Brown topside with tan band on forewing

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Legumes including black locust and honey locust

## SIMILAR SPECIES

None

## ID TIPS

Look for the large white spot!

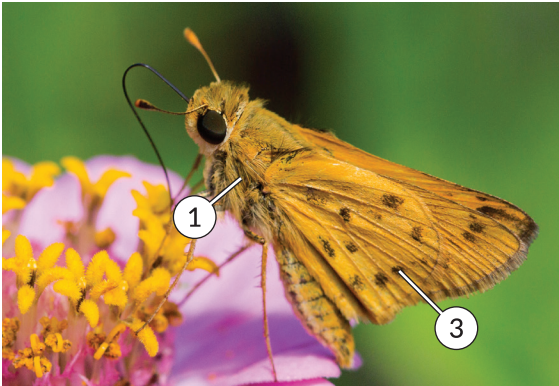
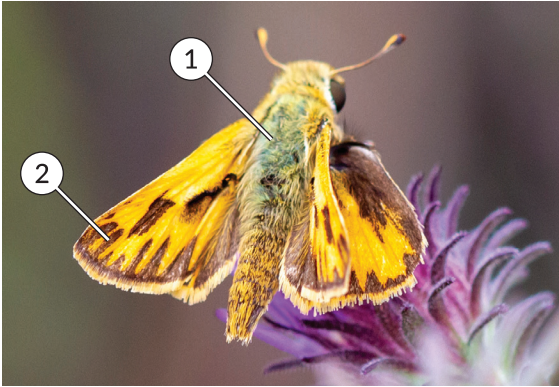
## DID YOU KNOW?

The silver-spotted skipper, as with most skippers, is a very fast flier.



# FIERY SKIPPER

*Hylephila phyleus*



Male



Female

## SIZE

Small (1.5 in/3.8 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Big body compared to triangular-shaped wings
2. Orange and brown jagged marks ("flames") on edge of upper wing
3. Orange with brown dots scattered on underside of hindwing
4. Female – Dots are less bold than males

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Grasses including crabgrass

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Many other orange skippers

## ID TIPS

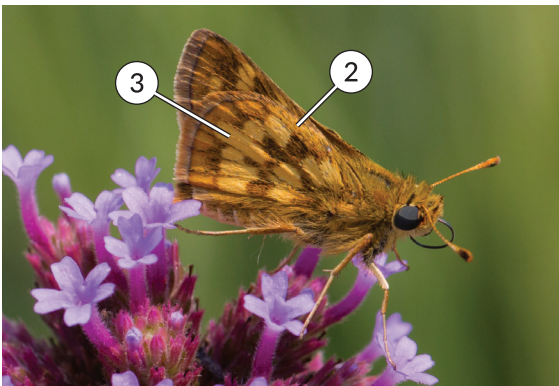
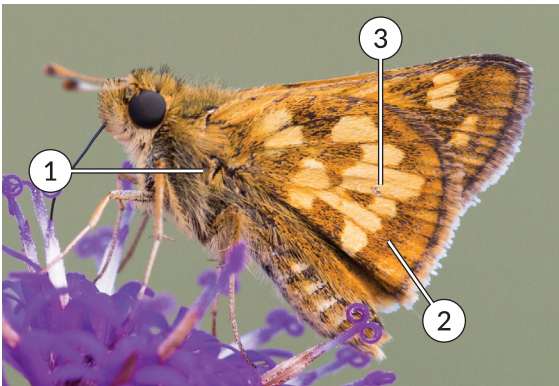
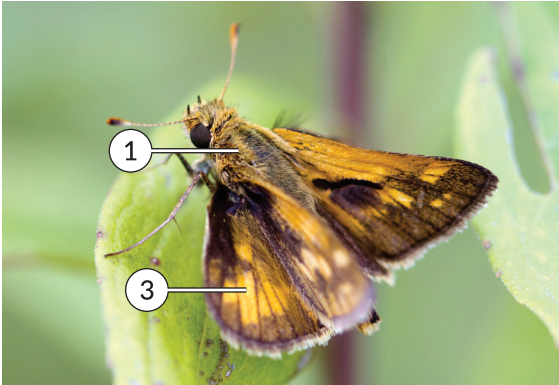
The scattering of spots is unique.

## DID YOU KNOW?

There are many similar-looking orange skippers in the Midwest. Of these, the fiery and peck's skipper are among the most common and easily identified (but few skippers are easy to ID!).

# PECK'S SKIPPER

*Polites peckius*



## SIZE

Small (1 in/2.5 cm)

## FOCUS ON

1. Big body compared to triangular-shaped wings
2. Blocky yellow and brown banded pattern on underside of hindwing
3. Middle of large yellow band on hindwing has longer, rectangular-shaped spot

## ADULT FEEDING

Flowers

## CATERPILLAR HOST

Rice cutgrass and other grasses

## SIMILAR SPECIES

Many other orange skippers

## ID TIPS

Look for the bold, blocky pattern and extended yellow spot.

# OTHER COMMON BUTTERFLY SPECIES

The 25 butterfly species in this book represent just a fraction of the species found in the Midwest. Detailed descriptions of these other species can be found in one of the more comprehensive guides listed on the resources page, but here are some photos of some other common butterflies found in this area to get you started.



Zebra swallowtail



Little yellow



Dainty sulphur



Southern dogface



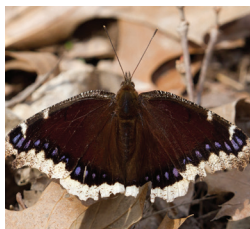
Sleepy orange



Summer azure



American lady



Mourning cloak



Variegated fritillary

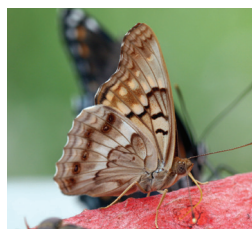




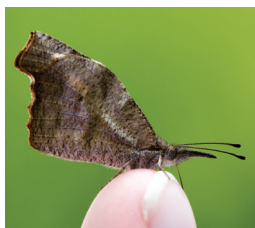
Silvery checkerspot



Gray comma



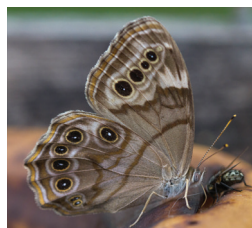
Tawny emperor



American snout



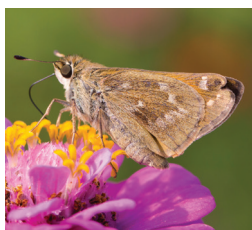
Little wood satyr



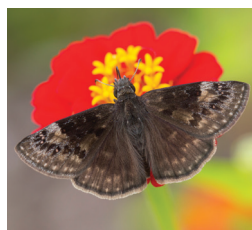
Northern pearly eye



Zabulon skippers  
(Male on right)



Sachem  
(Female)



Wild indigo duskywing

# DATA COLLECTION

## HELP US COLLECT DATA ON BUTTERFLIES

You can play a valuable role in helping us monitor butterfly populations. It's easy! Just sign up for a free iNaturalist account at [inaturalist.org](https://inaturalist.org), take pictures of butterflies with your phone or camera, and submit them along with the location of the butterflies by choosing as precise a location as possible from their map. You don't even have to identify the butterfly – the other users of iNaturalist will help you. The more you submit, the better our understanding becomes.

Go to [inaturalist.org](https://inaturalist.org) for more information and to download their free app for your phone.

## RESOURCES

Below are a few suggestions for identification books, websites, and groups related to butterflies and their conservation.

### COMPREHENSIVE FIELD GUIDES

- “Butterflies of Illinois” by M.R. Jeffords, S.L. Post, and J.R. Wiker
- “Butterflies of Indiana” by J.E. Belth
- “Butterflies of North America” by J.P. Brock and K. Kaufman

### FACEBOOK GROUPS

- Grand Prairie Butterfly Club
- Butterflies of the Eastern United States

### IDENTIFICATION SITES

- Butterflies and Moths of North America - [butterfliesandmoths.org](https://butterfliesandmoths.org)
- Wisconsin Butterflies - [wisconsinbutterflies.org](https://wisconsinbutterflies.org)

### CONSERVATION AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

- Urban Butterfly Initiative - [urbanbutterflies.org](https://urbanbutterflies.org)
- North American Butterfly Association - [naba.org](https://naba.org)
- Xerces Society - [xerces.org](https://xerces.org)
- Monarch Watch - [monarchwatch.org](https://monarchwatch.org)
- iNaturalist - [inaturalist.org](https://inaturalist.org)

### BUTTERFLY GARDENING

- “How to Start a Butterfly Garden” by NABA - [nababutterfly.com/start-butterfly-garden](https://nababutterfly.com/start-butterfly-garden)
- “Gardening for Butterflies” by The Xerces Society

# COMMON CATERPILLARS

One of the goals of using butterfly-friendly plants in landscapes is to provide resources for their caterpillars. You can use the caterpillar host plants given for each species for ideas on what to plant. Searching for caterpillars on those plants can be a fun challenge! Below are photos of some of the common caterpillars you may find.



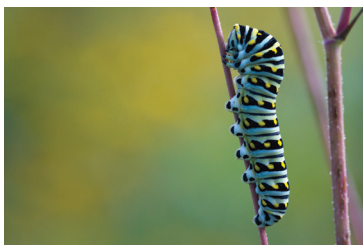
Buckeye



Giant swallowtail



Black swallowtail  
(Early stage)



Black swallowtail  
(Late stage)



Viceroy



Pipeline swallowtail



Monarch



Spicebush swallowtail







# SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF PLANTS

## MENTIONED IN THIS GUIDE

<b>Alfalfa</b>	<i>Medicago sativa</i>
<b>Aster</b>	<i>Symphyotrichum</i> sp.
<b>Bean</b>	<i>Phaseolus</i> sp.
<b>Black cherry</b>	<i>Prunus serotina</i>
<b>Black locust</b>	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>
<b>Broccoli</b>	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
<b>Cabbage</b>	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
<b>Clover</b>	<i>Trifolium</i> sp.
<b>Cottonwood</b>	<i>Populus deltoides</i>
<b>Crabgrass</b>	<i>Digitaria</i> sp.
<b>Dill</b>	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>
<b>Elm</b>	<i>Ulmus</i> sp.
<b>Golden Alexander</b>	<i>Zizia aurea</i>
<b>Hackberry</b>	<i>Celtis</i> sp.
<b>Hops</b>	<i>Humulus</i> sp.
<b>Honey locust</b>	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>
<b>Mallow</b>	<i>Malva</i> sp.
<b>Milkweed</b>	<i>Asclepias</i> sp.
<b>Mustard</b>	<i>Brassicaceae</i>
<b>Nettle</b>	<i>Urtica</i> sp.
<b>Parsley</b>	<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>
<b>Plantain</b>	<i>Plantago</i> sp.
<b>Prickly ash</b>	<i>Zanthoxylum americanum</i>
<b>Queen Anne's lace</b>	<i>Daucus carota</i>
<b>Rice cutgrass</b>	<i>Leersia oryzoides</i>
<b>Rue</b>	<i>Ruta graveolens</i>
<b>Sassafras</b>	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>
<b>Senna</b>	<i>Senna</i> sp.
<b>Snapdragon</b>	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>
<b>Spicebush</b>	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>
<b>Tulip poplar</b>	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
<b>Violet</b>	<i>Viola</i> sp.
<b>Virginia snakeroot</b>	<i>Aristolochia serpentaria</i>
<b>Wafer ash</b>	<i>Ptelea trifoliata</i>
<b>Willow</b>	<i>Salix</i> sp.
<b>Wooly pipevine</b>	<i>Aristolochia tomentosa</i>

# QUICK AND EASY GUIDE TO COMMON BUTTERFLIES

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If you are new to butterfly watching, this is the guide for you! "Quick and Easy Guide to Common Butterflies" provides a quick and easily accessible introduction to the 25 butterfly species you are most likely to see in gardens and parks in the Midwestern U.S. Each species has multiple photos and clearly describes key identification features to help you focus on the best ways to identify these beautiful insects.



Paul V. Switzer, Ph. D. has enjoyed nature all his life. When not teaching or conducting research at Eastern Illinois University, he can often be found wandering around his garden taking pictures. He founded the Grand Prairie Butterfly Club (a regional naturalist group) and is the founder and director of the Urban Butterfly Initiative.



VISIT US [URBANBUTTERFLIES.ORG](http://URBANBUTTERFLIES.ORG)