

Beginner's Checklist - Species Markings

This handout should be used to learn the markings of the Beginner's Checklist species. It will be most helpful if it is used in conjunction with one or more field guides. The species are separated into three categories: Least Difficulty, Medium Difficulty, and Most Difficulty. This refers to how difficult it is to separate the species from other similar species when identifying it for the first time. This is a subjective division. For example, some monitors may have no problem with the satyrs, while others will have great difficulty. Most new monitors find them to be in the medium category.

General Butterfly Facts:

- Moth vs. Butterfly - only sure way to tell - antennae - moth has no club - b-fly has club
- Complete metamorphosis - 4 life-stages - overwinters in each life stage
- adults emerge full-size
- 4 surfaces to learn - forewing, hindwing, upperside, underside - all can be different
- male and female can be somewhat different - usually not too different
- color shade can vary widely between individuals - do not use for identification
- size can be misleading - can have "runts" that are significantly smaller, however markings will still match

Least Difficulty:

Mourning Cloak - large with light band at edge, only similar insect is a grasshopper

Monarch - no line on hindwing, long glides during flight

Viceroy - line on hindwing, does not glide

Cabbage White - white, very little black, only at edges, very common

Common/Alfalfa Sulphur - both hybridize extensively, treat as one species when monitoring yellow to orange-yellow, may have some black along edges, very common
other whites and sulphurs will have visible patternings
DO NOT lump other sulphurs with common/alfalfa on field form

Silver Spotted Skipper - large for skipper, white splotch on hindwing, orange splotch on forewing

Other skippers - smaller, airplane formation, typically orange and black or brown

Buckeye - eyespots

Medium Difficulty:

Red Admiral - upperside easy, large red or orange band - bottom, no eyespots

Painted Lady - upperside, inner mark white - bottom, eyespots small

American Lady - upperside, inner mark orange - bottom, large eyespots

Milbert's Tortoiseshell - not on Checklist, rare in this area, distinctive orange band on upperside - included here because somewhat like Red Admiral on top, underside vaguely like mourning cloak, band not at edge - butterfly way too small

Hackberry - top, row of dots - bottom, vaguely like satyrs, wings wrong shape, too triangular

Medium Difficulty Continued:

Pearl Crescent - long forewings - very typical way of perching - "curly" patterns near body - black edging on top - row of solid, black dots along hindwing margin, fairly plain underneath

Silvery Checkerspot - not on Checklist, included here because very similar to Pearl Crescent, rare black dots on hindwing are actually donuts (light center), larger than Pearl Crescent

Fritillaries - no heavy black edge - usually light towards edge - tend to be more orange than black - pattern is not "curly" like crescent - undersides strongly patterned or colored, usually with white spots

Great Spangled Fritillary - large, very fast - light band near edge, readily visible

Greater & lesser Frits - lesser frits - about half the size of Great Spangled

Eyed Brown - no large eye spots - each spot like a donut - rounded hindwing - sunny open areas

Pearly Eye - no large eyespots - some are solid, much less donut shaped - somewhat scalloped hindwing - tends to be more strongly patterned on underside - savanna species

Wood Nymph - two large eye spots on forewing - small dots in a row on hindwing - open habitats

Little Wood Satyr - large eye spots on all wings - woody areas usually

Spring Azure - blue top, usually seen in flight - strong flyer - underside patterned like hairstreaks or eastern tailed blue - no colored spots on underside - no tails - somewhat boring

Eastern Tailed Blue - blue or very dark top - weak flyer, usually stays right above vegetation - frequently open slightly - underside usually only 2 orange spots - NO blue spot - tails on hindwing - 2 smaller black spots near body - most similar hairstreak is Acadian

Acadian Hairstreak - notice blue spot - no dots near body - characteristic hairstreak pattern of dots and dashes

Hairstreaks - not blue on top, drab grey or brown - sometimes dots are more like dashes - tails may be missing or fall off - ex. Coral Hairstreak doesn't have tails - focus on patterning

Most Difficulty:

Tiger Swallowtail - yellow form - easy, yellow on top and bottom

Giant Swallowtail - not on Checklist, only other swallowtail that is yellow underneath larger - not yellow on top - brown with two yellow crossing stripes

Black Swallowtail - male - strong yellow band

Black female - not as much yellow, but still inner yellow row of dots

Tiger dark form - no yellow except at edge - mutation version where yellow on regular tiger has been replaced with black or brown - patterning still shows slightly on fresh individuals

Red Spotted Purple - somewhat similar to swallowtails - no tail - blue/purple on top - red spots on underside

Question Mark - mark on underside has dot - wings are very hooked - tail like swallowtails - blue edge on upperside on tails - top, 3 dots plus dash

Comma - mark on underside has no dot - comma ends have caps - wings not as hooked - tail more stubby, not edged - top, dots, but no dash, not gray on underside, usually light brown

Gray Comma - more rare - fewer dots on top - comma tapers, no caps, gray on underside