

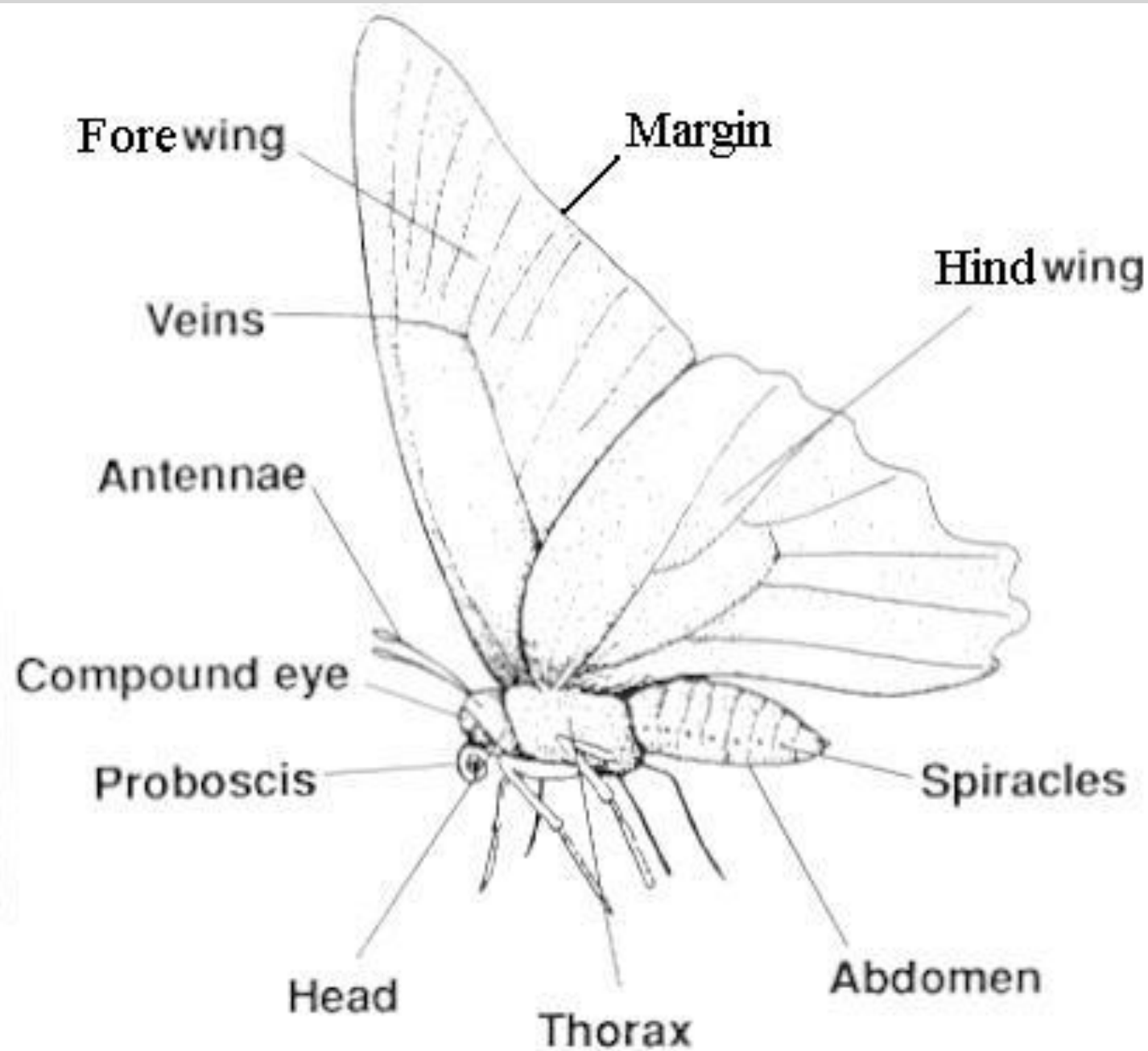


OVER 100 YEARS OF EDUCATION, CONSERVATION, & ADVOCACY

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

Butterfly Count

Orientation



Ease of ID rating

Some butterflies are so easy to ID, you can confidently name the butterfly even if it never lands. Others can sit on your hand for 10 minutes and you still won't know what it is. All these butterflies are handily rated!

- **Easy**—you can ID this one as it flies
- **Medium**—you need to get a look at it to be sure
- **Hard**—even if it stays still for you, this may take some time to ID

Abundance

The slides give the abundance of each butterfly in Rhode Island:

- Common
- Uncommon
- Rare
- Rare but may be locally common
- Exact status unknown

Swallowtails

PAPILIONIDAE

The largest butterflies



Female



Black Swallowtail

Wingspan: 3 ¼ - 4 ¼ in. Uncommon.

Mostly black. On inner edge of hindwing is an orange eyespot with a black center. Both male and female have rows of yellow spots. An easy way to differentiate is males have more yellow and females have more blue.

Medium—Can be confused with Spicebush Swallowtail and Red-Spotted Purple.

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

Wingspan: 3½ – 6½ in.
Common.

Male is yellow with dark tiger stripes. Female has 2 forms: one yellow, like male, and the other black with shadows of dark stripes. Hindwing of both female forms has many iridescent blue scales and an orange marginal spot.

Easy—you can ID this one as it flies*

*if you ignore the fact that we occasionally get stray Canadian Tiger Swallowtails, which are very similar



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Spicebush Swallowtail



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Spicebush Swallowtail

Wingspan: 3 – 4 in. Uncommon.

Upper surface of forewing black with white spots along margin. Upper surface of hindwing has orange spots and a sheen of bluish (female) or bluish-green (male) scales. Underside of hindwing has pale green marginal spots.

Medium—Can be confused with Black Swallowtail and Red-Spotted Purple

Whites and Sulphurs

PIERIDAE



Cabbage White Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Common.

White wings with black forewing tip. One black spot on forewing of male, 2 on female. Yellowish coloring to hindwing.

Easy--you can ID it as it flies*

*if you assume it isn't a rare sighting such as Checkered White or Mustard White, or a white morph female Sulphur.

If you can, check identifying markings to be sure



Clouded / Common Sulphur

Wingspan: 1 ½ - 2 ¾ in. Common. —→

Can be colored various shades of orange, which is visible in flight. Some females are white. Hybridizes with Clouded Sulphur.

Operational definition: if it has any orange, call it an Orange Sulphur.

Easy—Size distinguishes these from rare Little Yellow and Cloudless Sulphur.

Wingspan: 1 ½ - 2 ¾ in. Common.

←
Sulphurs typically land with wings closed. Silver spot on hindwing.
Cloud pattern to forewing.



Male

© Paul A. Opler

Orange Sulphur

Coppers, Hairstreaks, Elfins, and Blues

LYCAENIDAE



American Copper

©Paul A. Opler

Medium—Can look like Pearl Crescent if it zips by.

Wingspan: 1 – 1 ½ in.
Common.

Upper forewing is orange with black spots. Hindwing is greyish with black spots and orange band.



Hairstreaks: There are many kinds in RI. Usually small, they often have tail-like projections on their wings. They have black and white striped antennae. None are common here and many are confusing. Some examples:



More Hairstreaks.....

Coral Hairstreak



Gray Hairstreak



Olive / Juniper Hairstreak



Hard—some Hairstreaks are easier to ID than others, but as a whole, save this group as a challenge for later.



Eastern Pine Elfin

© Paul Opler

Wingspan: 1 – 1 ¼ in. Uncommon.

Dark brown with reddish-brown to black bands. Dissimilar to other species.
Named for preference of pine woodland habitat.

Medium—cannot easily ID in flight, but once it stops, it is easy to distinguish.
There are other Elfins, but they do not have the banding this one does.



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Eastern Tailed-Blue



Wingspan: roughly 1 inch. Common.

Underside, as seen at left, is gray with black bars & spots, and orange spots near small tail. Upperside of male is iridescent blue. Some blue in spring female, but more brown in summer.

Medium—easily confused with Azure species in flight, but once it lands, look for the orange spots near “tail” to distinguish.

Spring Azure

Wingspan: 1 – 1 ½ in.

Common.

Underside gray with faded black spots. Upperside is blue, but not as dark as Eastern Tailed Blue.



toe

A. Lorenzin

To give you an idea how small these guys are...

Medium*—easily confused with Eastern Tailed Blue in flight, but once it lands, look for orange spots—if there are none, it's an Azure. *Since Azure species are difficult to distinguish from each other and there is debate on species definition, we report all Azures as “Azure species” on the Butterfly Count.

Brush-footed Butterflies

NYMPHALIDAE

Named for the characteristically small forelegs.
Consist of some of the best known and most conspicuous
butterflies.



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Great Spangled Fritillary

Wingspan: 2 - 4 in. Common.

Underside of male tan to orange with black scales on forewing veins; female tawny, darker than male. Underside of hindwing with wide pale submarginal band and large silver spots. **Cream-colored post-median band is wide.**

Hard—This is the most common Fritillary in RI, but is easy to confuse with uncommon Aphrodite Fritillary. Post-median band is key.



Wingspan: 2 ½ - 3 ¼ in. Uncommon.

Cinnamon-brown with black spots on upperside. Silvery spots on underside.

Cream-colored post-median band is narrow or patchy.

Hard— Easy to confuse with Great Spangled Fritillary.
Post-median band is key.



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Variegated Fritillary



© Troy Bartlett

Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 3 in. Rare.

Dull orange-brown with black spots near margin. Underside of hindwing with a mottled pattern and no silver spots.

Medium--similar to other Fritillaries, but underside lacks spots.

Silver Bordered Fritillary



Wingspan: 1½-2 inches. Rare.

Underside distinctive with median and marginal bands of silvered white.
Above, narrow black borders enclose orange spots.

Medium—Similar above to Pearl Crescent, and below to other Fritillaries, but size is different.



Baltimore

© Paul Opler



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Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Uncommon.

Row of red-orange spots along outer margin and rows of white spots inward. Orange face.

Easy—especially distinctive once it lands



©Paul Opler

Pearl Crescent



Wingspan: 1 – 1 ½ in. Common.

Small, bright orange with brown border enclosing pale crescents.

Medium*—Can look like American Copper if it zips by.

*If you ignore the fact that nearly identical Northern Crescent (exact status unknown) may be present in RI



Pearl Crescent



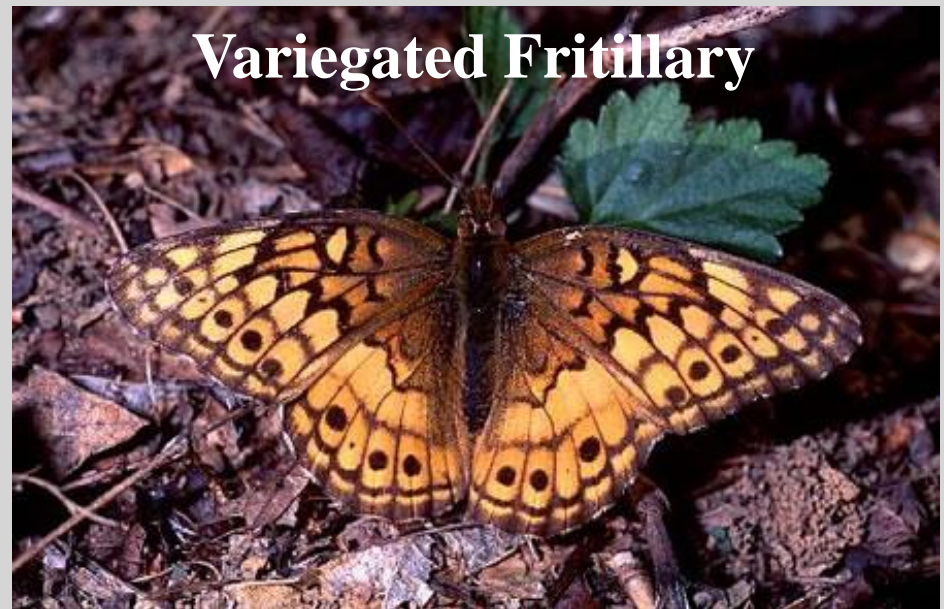
Silver-bordered Fritillary

POP QUIZ



American
Copper

Dark hindwing,
whereas, others
are orange



Variegated Fritillary

Question Mark

and

Eastern Comma



Question Mark:

Wingspan 2 ¾ -3 inches. Silvered "question mark" below and FW sub-apical spot above.

Eastern Comma:

Wingspan 1 ¾-2 ½ inches. Silvered "comma" below. No FW sub-apical mark.



Both uncommon. **Hard**—easily confused. Look for size (Comma is smaller) and markings.



Compton Tortoiseshell

Wingspan: 2 ½ - 3 in. Exact status unknown.

Upperside is orange-brown with darker wing bases, black spots and a single white spot on leading edge of each wing. Underside is mottled gray and brown, with dark bases and borders. Differentiated from other butterflies of similar color by jagged wings.

Medium—similar to Eastern Comma and Question Mark, but white spots are distinctive.



Mourning Cloak

Wingspan: 2 ¼ - 4 in. Uncommon.

Short projections on both wings, borders irregular. Upperside is purple-black with a wide, bright yellow border on outer margins, and a row of iridescent blue spots at the inner edge of the border.

Easy—no other butterfly you can confuse it with



American Lady

Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Common.

Upperside with uneven brown, yellow, and orange pattern. Forewing with a black patch, a small white spot in the orange field below the patch, and a white bar at the leading edge of the forewing. Underside of hindwing has two large eyespots.

Medium—very similar to Painted Lady, but if you get a look at the eyespots you can tell them apart



Painted Lady

Wingspan: 2 – 3 in. Uncommon.

Upperside is orange-brown with darker wing bases; forewing with black apex patch and white bar; hindwing submarginal row of small black spots, sometimes blue scales. Underside has a black, brown, and gray pattern with 4 small submarginal eyespots.

Medium—very similar to American Lady, but if you get a look at the eyespots you can tell them apart



Red Admiral

Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 3 in.
Common.

Upperside is black with white spots near the apex; forewing with red median band, hindwing with red marginal band.

Easy—looks like Lady species from below, but above is distinctive

By the looks of the tattered wings, this butterfly has likely escaped a bird or two!



Common Buckeye

Wingspan: 1 ½ - 2 ¾ in.

Uncommon.

Brown with distinctive eyespots. Eyespots are a defense mechanism used by butterflies and caterpillars.

Medium—may not be able to ID in flight, but easy once it lands.





'Astyanax' Red-spotted Purple

© Opler



Wingspan: 2 ¼ - 4 in
Uncommon.

Upperside is blue to aqua with iridescence on the outer part of the hindwing. Underside is dark brown with 3 red-orange spots near the base and a row of red-orange spots. Often seen puddling.

Medium—Can be confused with Black Swallowtail and Spicebush Swallowtail. But this one has no tails!



White Admiral

Wingspan 2 ½ - 3 ¼. Rare. Hybridizes with Red-spotted Purple in a large zone between southern ME and MA through NY and PA. **Easy**—distinctive.



Red-spotted
Purple



Female Black
Swallowtail

Spicebush
Swallowtail



Baltimore



Male Black Swallowtail



Viceroy

Wingspan: 2 ½ - 3 ½ in

Viceroy mimics Monarch. Key to differentiating is median black line across hindwings present in Viceroy, not Monarch. Viceroy also somewhat smaller. Monarch is common, Viceroy uncommon.

Monarch



Medium for both—hard to tell for sure unless it lands



Photo by Fred Goodwin 2002



Photo by Barbara Spencer

Common Wood Nymph Wingspan 1 ¼ in. Common.

Dark brown satyr. Large yellow forewing patches are distinctive in most of the East, including RI, but are not present in northern populations.

Easy to ID.



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Little Wood Satyr

Wingspan: 1 ½ - 2 in. Common.

Light brown. Forewing has 2 yellow-rimmed black eyespots both above and below. Hindwing has 2 eyespots on upper side; but may have smaller spots below.

Medium—Eyed Brown, Appalachian Brown and Northern Pearly-eye are similar. Count the spots when it lands.

Three Similar Brown Butterflies

Hard—get out your field guide for these. Better yet, get a photo!



Northern Pearly Eye

Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Rare.

Underside is brown, with large, dark eyespots. More striking color than the Browns. Submarginal row of 4 black spots on forewing.



Appalachian Brown

Wingspan: 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ -2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Rare, but may be common locally.

Forewing eyespots often of unequal size and intensity. HW basal line straight.



Eyed Brown

Wingspan: 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. Rare.

Forewing eyespots usually of equal size and intensity. HW basal line with “tooth”.

Common Ringlet

Wingspan: 1 ¼ -1 ½ inches. Common.

Small, pale satyr with orange flush. Hindwing with white post-median line and no spots. Usually with small dark eyespot on apex of forewing.



Medium—duller individuals may be confused with Little Wood Satyr in flight, but easy to ID once it lands.

And now, the ultimate challenge...

The Skippers

HESPERIIDAE

Hard—Except for Silver Spotted Skipper, save this group as a challenge for later.

Butterfly, Skipper, or Moth?



Butterfly

Skipper

Moth

Antennae clubbed	Antennae clubbed with hooked ends	Antennae not clubbed
Wings typically held closed at rest, upright over body	Wings typically held open at rest	Wings typically held closed at rest, flat against body
Most are diurnal	Most are diurnal	Most are nocturnal
Body slender and smooth	Body thick	Body thick
Most are brightly colored	Most are dull colored	Most are dull colored

Silver Spotted Skipper Wingspan: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Common.

This large, common skipper can be easily identified. Note the white spot in the middle of the hindwing underside, and golden brown forewing spots. **Easy**—the only similar one is rare Hoary Edge, with blurrier white spot at edge of wing, not middle.



A few of our more common skippers:



Little Glassywing



Delaware Skipper



European Skipper



Northern Broken Dash



Dun Skipper



Peck's Skipper

Spread-Winged Skippers

These *really* look like moths...

but the hooked antennae give them away.



Wild Indigo Duskywing



Common Sootywing

These are just a few examples. There are many look-alikes.

Identifying skippers takes time and experience!

Happy Butterflying!



Sources

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