

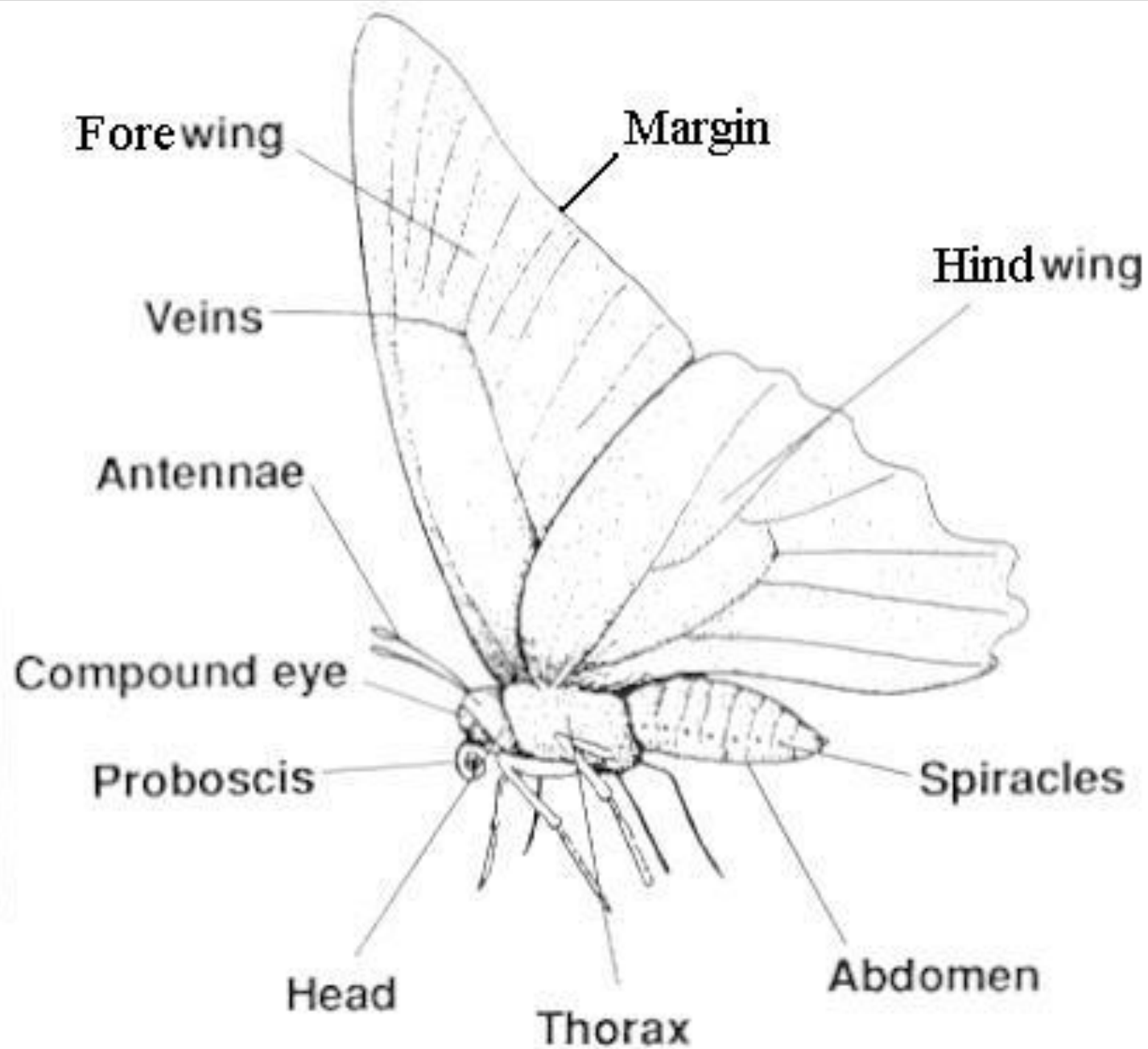


OVER 100 YEARS OF EDUCATION, CONSERVATION, & ADVOCACY

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



© Michelle St. Sauveur



© Michelle St. Sauveur

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, but males have more yellow and females have more blue. The butterfly above is male.

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.

(This one's missing one of its tails!)

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

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



© Michelle St. Sauveur



© Dann Thombs

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



Common Sulphur



Orange Sulphur

Wingspan: 1 ½ - 2 ¾ in. Common.

These are two similar species—and they hybridize. Clouded Sulphur is a pure yellow and Orange Sulphur has varying shades of yellow-orange that can be seen in flight. Both have dark margins on dorsal side. Operational definition: if it has any orange, call it an Orange Sulphur.

Easy—usually. Size distinguishes these from rare Little Yellow and Cloudless Sulphur. But some females are white and look a lot like Cabbage Whites.



Coppers, Hairstreaks, Elfins, and Blues

LYCAENIDAE



American Copper

Wingspan: 1 – 1 ½ in. Common.

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

Medium—Can look like Pearl Crescent if it zips by, but dark hindwing with orange border is distinct and can be seen in flight.

Hairstreaks: There are 12 species named “Hairstreak” 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:



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Banded Hairstreak



© Michael Tinnemeier 2008

Gray Hairstreak



© Michelle St. Sauveur

Edwards' Hairstreak



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Coral 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

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.



© Michael Tinnemeier 2008



© Michael Tinnemeier 2008



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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 and “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.

Great Spangled Fritillary--Wingspan: 2 - 4 in. Common.



© Mike Tucker



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Underside of male tan to orange with black scales on forewing veins; female tawny, darker than male. Underside of hindwing with 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 (narrow and patchy in Aphrodite) is key.



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Aphrodite Fritillary

Silver-bordered Fritillary



© Michael Kieron 2008



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Wingspan: 1½-2 inches. Rare.

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

Medium—Dorsal similar to Pearl Crescent; size much smaller than other fritillaries



Baltimore Checkerspot

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

*May be abundant locally



© David Mozzoni 2008



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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

POP QUIZ

Pearl Crescent



Silver-bordered Fritillary



Aphrodite Fritillary



Great Spangled Fritillary



Question Mark



Question Mark:

Wingspan 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -3 inches. Silvered “question mark” below and FW sub-apical spot above.

Eastern Comma:

Wingspan 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Silvered “comma” below. No FW sub-apical mark.

Both uncommon. Both variable, with summer broods having more black on ventral hindwing and more mottled dorsal side than fall broods.



&

Eastern Comma



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

Question Mark or Eastern Comma?

Question Mark



Eastern Comma



Eastern Comma



Question Mark





Mourning Cloak

Wingspan: 2 ¼ - 4 in. Uncommon.

Short projections on both wings, borders irregular. Upperside is purple-black with a wide, bright yellow or cream 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. Eyespots on hindwing underside (4 small spots on Painted, 2 large on American) distinguish



Painted Lady

Wingspan: 2 – 3 in. Uncommon.

Upperside is orange-brown with darker wing bases; forewing with black semicircular band; hindwing submarginal row of small black spots, sometimes blue scales. Underside has cobweb pattern and 4 small submarginal eyespots.

Medium—very similar to American Lady. Eyespots on hindwing underside (4 small spots on Painted, 2 large on American) distinguish.



© Laura Carberry 2006



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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—can look like Lady species from below, but above is distinctive

Common Buckeye



© Michelle St. Sauveur

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.



© Michelle St. Sauveur

Red-spotted Admiral

Red-spotted Admiral is one species with two distinctly different-looking subspecies –Red-spotted Purple and White Admiral--that hybridize in our region.

Red-Spotted Purple

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!



© Frank Model

White Admiral

Wingspan 2 ½ - 3 ¼ in. Rare.

Hybridizes with Red-spotted Purple in a large zone between southern ME and MA through NY and PA.

Easy—distinctive.

(Here is a hybrid form with faint white markings.)



© Michelle St. Sauveur



© Frank Model



© Frank Model

Red-spotted
Purple



© Michelle St. Sauveur

Male Black Swallowtail



© Michelle St. Sauveur

Name that butterfly!

Spicebush
Swallowtail



©Bryan Glemboski 2008

Female Black Swallowtail



© Frank Model

Monarch & Viceroy

Monarch



© David Mozzoni 2008

Viceroy



© Dann Thombs

Monarch



© David Mozzoni 2008

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.

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

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.

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 usually more straight than Eyed Brown.



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". This butterfly would be a very unusual RI sighting.

Common Ringlet



© Bryan Glemboski 2008

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



© Sandra Gaumont 2006

Silver-spotted Skipper--common



© Walter Bosse 2007

Hoary Edge--rare

A few of our common skippers:



Least Skipper



European Skipper



Long Dash



Peck's Skipper

Spread-Winged Skippers

These *really* look like moths...
but the hooked antennae give them away.



Juvenal's Duskywing



Common Sootywing

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

Identifying skippers takes time and experience!

Happy Butterflying!



Walter Bosse 2006

Thanks to all who donated photographs!

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- Mike Tucker

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