

Butterflies in Langley

Butterflies, like all living things, require habitat. Habitat in its simplest terms is someone's home, providing the essentials of life, including food, shelter and water. Habitat also provides butterflies with a safe place to 'pupate' or turn from a larva to a pupa to a butterfly.

Butterflies basically require two types of food. First, caterpillars need host plants, which vary widely depending on the species. Next, adults require nectar (sugar) sources from flowers, or tree sap (sapsucker wells). Some butterflies obtain moisture and salts from what may seem like unusual sources, such as carrion or animal dung. On a warm summer day, you may also see butterflies gathered at a mud puddle (a "puddle party").



Western
Tiger
Swallowtail

One of several local swallowtails, this is our most common species. The caterpillars have "false eyes" to scare away predators. Caterpillar host plants are cottonwood, aspen and willow. Nectar sources include Tiger Lily, Orange Trumpet, and Honeysuckle. **FLIGHT PERIOD** *late spring to early summer*



Cabbage
White

A European species, it is one of our most common butterflies. It is well known to gardeners, in both its adult and greenish caterpillar forms. It has several broods per summer and autumn. The caterpillars feed on plants of the cabbage (mustard) family. Habitat is sunny meadows and gardens—where adults sip nectar from many garden flowers; Lemon Balm is a favourite.



Arctic Skipper

Not truly “arctic” (Tilden and Smith). This species frequents forest clearings, sunny meadows, and trail sides. Flight is said to be weak. Caterpillars, like those of other skippers, feed on various grasses. **FLIGHT PERIOD** *sunny summer days*



European Skipper

A recent introduction from Europe. Caterpillar host plants are various grasses. Nectars on a wide variety of weedy plants, including Common Tansy and Canada Goldenrod. **FLIGHT PERIOD** *mid-summer to early autumn*



Woodland Skipper

Our most common native skipper, it is seen on warm summer days nectaring on a wide variety of flowers—asters are a favourite. Caterpillar hosts plants are a variety of grasses. Look for its curved antennae—a signature feature of skippers.



Margined White
(Mustard White)

One of our earliest butterflies, seen along sunny trails and forest edges, it could be mistaken for a “cabbage” but look for its darker veins. The caterpillars feed on plants of the cabbage (mustard) family. Adults nectar on various wild flowers. Campbell Valley Regional Park is a good place to watch for it hovering around Cardamine (Winter Cress).



Pine White

Watch for this species in mixed forest habitats, where it is seen on sunny summer days nectaring on flowers, including Dandelion, Hairy Cat’s-ear as well as other dandelion look-alikes. Caterpillar host plants are Pines and Douglas-fir. Abundant in some years but not in others. It has a strong flight, moving quickly through the trees.



Silvery Blue

One of several small blue butterflies. The Silvery Blue is best identified by its slow flight. It may be one of the first blues to appear in spring. Blues like the Silvery are capable of withstanding chilly weather. It has a wide range of habitats, including meadows, forest edges and sunny glades. Caterpillar host plants are the pea family (“legumes”). Found across North America—10 geographic races are recognized.



Western Spring Azure

The dazzling bright blue of the male is striking. The female has less blue and more brown; there is a “dark band” around the outer margins of her wings. Caterpillar food plants include Dogwood and Ocean Spray. Watch for this, our most common “blue” butterfly, on a warm spring day. **HABITAT** *gardens, forest edges*



Purplish Copper

This charming little species is a good example of how having some tolerance for weeds is important for the butterflies. Caterpillars of this species feed on Dock, Knotweed, and Sheep Sorrel. Habitat includes weedy places, meadows.

FLIGHT PERIOD *late spring to mid summer*



Satyr Anglewing
(Satyr Comma)

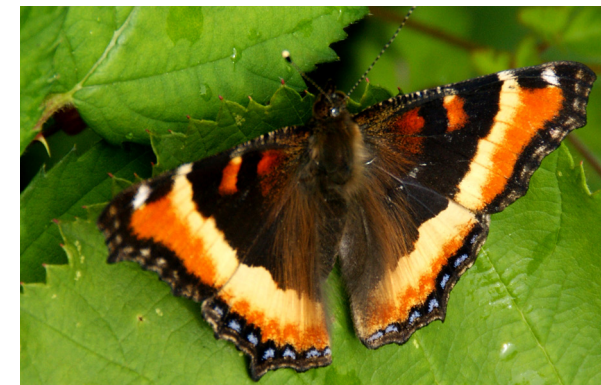
Anglewing—now you see it, now you don’t! When an anglewing (“comma”) folds its wings, it suddenly looks like a dead leaf! Then you can watch for the small silvery “commas” on the underwings. Its caterpillars feed on Stinging Nettle. Watch for it in early spring along forest edges. A look-alike species is the Green Anglewing. At the locations where the Satyr Anglewing has dark “double spots” on its forewing, the Green Anglewing has single spots.



Compton Tortoiseshell

Like an anglewing (comma) but larger. Its greenish caterpillar has black spines and it feeds on willow, birch and poplar (e.g. aspen). Adults overwinter, laying eggs in spring. Habitat includes clearings, forest and trail edges.

FLIGHT PERIOD *warm spring days to late summer*



Milbert’s Tortoiseshell

Watch for this colourful butterfly in a wide variety of habitats including gardens, forest edges and meadows. The caterpillars feed on Stinging Nettle. Richard Bear, in Garden Butterflies of the Georgia Basin, notes that “some of the pupae are coloured gold like a polished Yukon nugget”. **FLIGHT PERIOD** *spring and summer*



Red Admiral

A common garden species, this is another one of the nettle butterflies, whose caterpillars feed on Stinging Nettle. Adults may overwinter here. They have a long flight period, from April to October, and they nectar on a wide variety of plants, including Butterfly Bush (non-invasive) and Mock Orange.

HABITAT *meadows, forest edges and of course gardens*



Lorquin's Admiral

A species with some unusual feeding habits (for a butterfly). Adults will feed on carrion, rotting fruit and animal “dung”. The caterpillars eat a variety of plants including willow, poplar (including aspen) and Spirea (e.g. Hardhack).

HABITAT *forest edges and gardens* **FLIGHT PERIOD** *June to September*



Painted Lady

The Painted Lady is one of the “thistle butterflies”. Its caterpillars feed on thistle (especially Canada Thistle) and adults nectar on thistle flowers. It is a long distant migrant and can be abundant in some years. The black caterpillar makes a silk “nest”, near where it feeds. Another caterpillar plant (if you don't want thistles) is Pearly Everlasting. **FLIGHT PERIOD** *Spring to early Fall*



Mourning Cloak

A widespread species in forest edges, meadows, and gardens. It is gregarious. Caterpillars feed on willow. Adults overwinter, so it is possible to see them on warm winter days. (The yellowish wing margins will look paler in overwintering adults.) Lilac and Mock Orange are good nectar sources. **FLIGHT PERIOD** *early spring to late summer*
