

Common Butterflies

These butterflies are common because their larval food plants are plentiful. Food plants tend to be those found on roadsides, in old fields and your vegetable garden. As pollinators, they are as hard working as their spectacular relatives.



The **Orange Sulphur** is widespread and common throughout US laying its eggs on a variety of native and exotic clovers and other legumes such as peas and beans.



Its relative the **Cabbage White** was introduced from Europe in 1800's. It is a butterfly version of the House Sparrow and Starling in that it is a transplanted very at

home in cities. It is considered a pest in gardens but is a very effective pollinator. Like the Orange Sulphur it can choose among a variety of larval hosts including cabbage, nasturtium, watercress, capers, and both cultivated and invasive mustards.

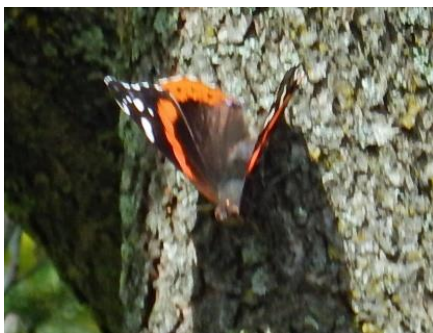


Skippers are the least elegant of butterflies having stout bodies relative to wingspan. Generally choosing among a variety of grasses as larval hosts, they are commonly found in moist grassy meadows, along power lines, on lawns and roadsides. The **Peck's Skipper** in the photograph was enjoying the nectar of and pollinating Hedge Bindweed on the lagoon embankment of Hershey's Mill.



The **Wild Indigo Dusky Wing** is a rare example of improved fortune due to an imported now invasive plant species. It was once a rare butterfly as it was restricted to Wild Indigo as a larval food plant but it was able to adapt to using the alien Crown Vetch. Crown Vetch was planted for roadside erosion control and is now ubiquitous.

The delicate **Eastern Tailed-blue Butterfly** goes a step beyond to defend itself against predators. The larvae produce a sugary secretion that attracts ants that in turn defend their benefactors. If you see ants on your legumes, check for larvae of this species.



The **Red Admiral** is widespread in distribution but highly territorial in habit. In late afternoon it sets up a territory on lawns or hilltops to find females. It has a fast erratic flight, is pugnacious and may even fly at invading humans. Its larval food plants are the weedy nettles and false nettles.