

Look!

Some Butterflies of Los Altos Hills

Which ones have YOU seen?



John Metcalfe for
California Naturalist
Class 2021
Grass Roots Ecology

Did you know?

Our most common urban butterfly. Resting position makes it easy to spot. Males chasing males games are fast, fun often spiraling high as they smell each other like dogs do



Fiery Skipper

1. **Size:** Small 1½" - 1¾"
2. **Flight:** April to December
3. **Marks:** Orange with brown streaks and borders and dusky spots on underside. Fast flyer. Sits with forewings up and hindwings flattened. Short antennae
4. **Visits:** Caterpillars eat grasses. Adults visit many flowers
5. **Habitat:** Grassy areas, golf courses and lawns

Did you know?

Patrols its area. Sits on a lookout twig watching for intruders and mates

Overwinters as an adult and will fly around on sunny days with little wind in January to April



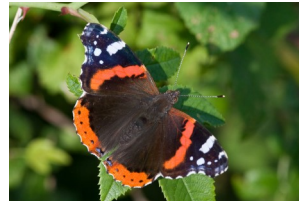
Mourning Cloak

1. **Size:** Large 2¼" - 3½"
2. **Flight:** March to September laying eggs. New adults emerge mid-summer and live through winter. Glides and flaps. Quite fast
3. **Marks:** Dark brown with wide yellow or white border and small blue edge dots. Underside is dark
4. **Visits:** Buckeye, willow, catkins
5. **Habitat:** Woodlands with water/damp and sunny patches

Did you know?

Overwinters as adult butterfly, sometimes in your house or shed!

Caterpillars will make a nest of silk and lives together on nettles



Red Admiral

1. **Size:** Large 2" - 2½"
2. **Flight:** All year on sunny days. Fast flight stopping for flowers or to sun itself
3. **Marks:** Orange and black with orange bands on forewing and hindwing. Unlike ladies, no round spots on underwing
4. **Visits:** Nettles, buckeye, thistles, willows, damaged fruit
5. **Habitat:** Where thistles grow. Moist meadows, urban too

Did you know?

Overwinters as adults in very large colonies on California coast. In Spring, multiple generations migrate north
Sometimes mistaken for gulf fritillary, painted lady or red admiral

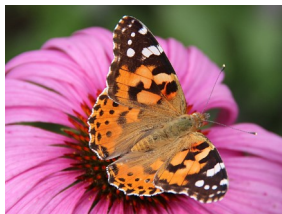


Monarch

1. **Size:** Very Large 4½" - 4¾"
2. **Flight:** August to November then on sunny days November to April where hibernating
3. **Marks:** Orange with a black border, containing white spots. Black veins and black body
4. **Visits:** Caterpillars eat milkweed, adult nectars on flowers
5. **Habitat:** Roadsides, canyons, gardens, open spaces

Did you know?

Migrates strongly north in late March to April often in large numbers. Indicating which way north lies! Thousands can appear some years
Overwinters as adult butterfly

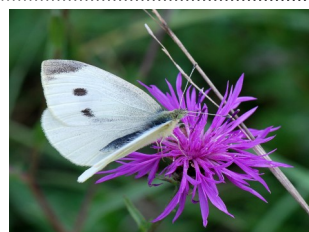


Painted Lady

1. **Size:** Large 2" - 2¾"
2. **Flight:** All Year
3. **Marks:** Black and orange with white block on front wing, black dots on rear and circles on underside
4. **Visits:** Thistles, mule ears, plantain, many flowers
5. **Habitat:** Almost anywhere

Did you know?

Invasive butterfly originally from Europe. Our only naturalized exotic butterfly. Causes crop damage
Caterpillar eats cabbage, mustard, nasturtium



Cabbage White

1. **Size:** Medium 1¾" - 2¼"
2. **Flight:** March to October. Common and widespread
3. **Marks:** White with black tips. Female has two black spots, males have one
4. **Visits:** Cabbage, mustard, nasturtium
5. **Habitat:** Most places, often urban settings

Scan or <https://sites.google.com/view/look-butterflies/home>

- Photograph credits, Latin names
- Resources for interested people
- The butterfly life cycle

Reprints: Los Altos Hills Town Hall or
use QR code to find download site

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Did you know?

Often the first blue butterfly of early springtime. Males fly around bushes looking for females. Both butterflies often spend time in the tree tops
Similar to other small blues, but spring azure has no red dots

Spring Azure or Echo Blue

1. **Size:** Very small 1" - 1½"
2. **Flight:** February to July. Flutters 10 feet from the ground over bushes looking wind blown but it's heading where it wants to go
3. **Marks:** Pale blue with black (top) and white (bottom) border. Underside blue with a line of spots
4. **Visits:** Puddles and mud. Caterpillars eat flowers like buckeye
5. **Habitat:** Open spaces, paths near woodland. Rests wings closed



Did you know?

Birds think the tail is the head saving the butterfly but sometimes it loses its tails
They are attracted to the Plaza in Market Street for its flowering cherry trees, planes trees, a water fountain, and dappled sun

Western Tiger Swallowtail

1. **Size:** Very large 3½" - 4½"
2. **Flight:** March - September mainly June/July
3. **Marks:** Black stripes on yellow with blue edge, tails and small red eye spots. Glides and flaps. Likes treetops
4. **Visits:** Buckeye, and many garden flowers and puddles
5. **Habitat:** Woodlands with streams and willows



Did you know?

Caterpillars look just like bird poop. Who would eat that! Males patrol their patches on trails moving from perch to perch about 10 feet up. Rests with wings open.
Similar to California sister but has no black surrounding orange spot

Lorquin's Admiral

1. **Size:** Large 2½" - 2¾"
2. **Flight:** April to September. Glides among trees
3. **Marks:** Black with a bold band of white rectangles on forewings and orange wingtips
4. **Visits:** Buckeye flowers, yerba santa, thistle
5. **Habitat:** Openings and edges of moist forests. Streams and wet areas with willows and sunny spots

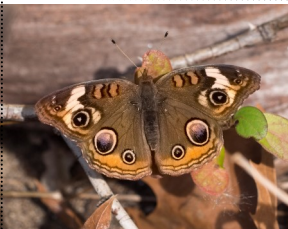


Did you know?

Flight - flap, flap, glide . Will eat roadkill—argh!
Very similar to Lorquin's admiral but has black surrounding orange spot on forewings

California Sister

1. **Size:** Large 2¾" - 3½"
2. **Flight:** April to October. Swift and high gliding down now and then. Males perch watching for females
3. **Marks:** Dark brown with white stripe, large orange spot
4. **Visits:** Oaks, Buckeye, Coyote bush and old fruit
5. **Habitat:** Oak woodlands, canyons. Puddles on damp sand

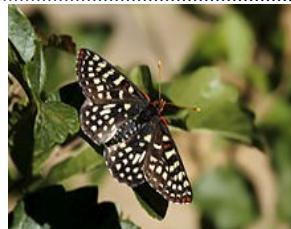


Did you know?

The eye spots scare away birds. Can feel like it's following or leading you on sunny trails by landing and taking off near you
Host: Plantains, clover, monkey flower, bee plants. Rest with wings open

Common Buckeye

1. **Size:** Medium 1½" - 2¼"
2. **Flight:** March to November .Fast flyer, sits on ground often, patrols for mates on trails
3. **Marks:** Brown with six eye spots and four red rectangles on forewing
4. **Visits:** Coyote bush, clovers, buckeyes
5. **Habitat:** Open fields, trails and pathways. Not in deep forests

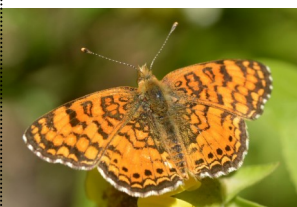


Did you know?

During a drought caterpillars can hibernate for several years
Caterpillars eat bee plants, penstemon, monkey flower, plantain
Similar to other checkerspot, perhaps mylitta crescent

Variable or Chalcidon Checkerspot

1. **Size:** Medium 1¾" - 2¼"
2. **Flight:** March/April to June/July
3. **Marks:** Black with small yellow spots and red spots on hind wing, Red/yellow antenna, White dots on body.
4. **Visits:** An avid visitor to many flowers
5. **Habitat:** Meadows, chaparral



Did you know?

Butterflies can see movement but must be very close to another insect to see and smell if it's another mylitta—like dogs do

Mylitta Crescent

1. **Size:** Small 1½" - 1¾"
2. **Flight:** March to September
3. **Marks:** Orange with black border, a row of black dots and squiggles. Orange tipped antennae
4. **Visits:** Thistles
5. **Habitat:** Wet meadows with thistles, woodland openings near water. Patrols streams and trails



Did you know?

It's colors get lighter towards winter matching dry grassland
It zig zags just above grass in a random looking pattern to avoid predators but always knows where it's going. It never seems to stop flying and settle

California or Common Ringlet

1. **Size:** Small 1" - 1½"
2. **Flight:** March to September above grass
3. **Marks:** Looks a bit like a moth. Light brown/orange with small black rings and a ziggle on underside
4. **Visits:** grasses, meadow flowers
5. **Habitat:** Grassland, oak woodland with grass