



A Field Guide to the Butterflies

COMMON TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI
FIELD STATION



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How to use this field guide



For ease of identification, the outer edge of each page in this guide has been color coded orange, blue, yellow, white, or brown. When you see a butterfly you would like to identify, simply turn to the section that most accurately matches its distinguishing (usually the lightest or brightest) color.

The brown section includes all butterflies that usually have dull, matte brown, or gray coloration. A few species in the gray section may have some subdued orange markings.

Skippers are easily distinguished from butterflies by their stout bodies and hooked antennal tips. Almost all skippers are black, dark brown, or orange. All skippers are placed together at the end of the guide, and the edges of these pages are checkered with brown and orange.

The butterflies in this guide represent the species most commonly seen at the UM Field Station during the past few years. As with any guide of this nature, it is unlikely that every species occurring in the area has been collected, and it is quite likely that the ardent butterfly enthusiast will turn up new records. We hope to update subsequent editions of this guide with these records, and we encourage submissions of new sightings to the main Field Station office located at the Center for Water and Wetland Resources.

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Introduction

Butterflies and skippers are conspicuous and familiar members of insect communities throughout most of the world. Unlike most insects, their beautiful colors and general association with flowers place them in the position of being favorites in our yards. Many people plant flower gardens in an attempt to attract them in large numbers.

The rainbow of colors they exhibit are caused by shinglelike, flattened scales on their wings. The presence of these scales is the basis for the placement of all butterflies and moths in order Lepidoptera (which literally means "scaly wings"). This is a relatively large group with more than 11,000 species occurring in North America. About 20 percent of these species are considered to be butterflies or skippers. The remaining 80 percent are moths.

These general characteristics are useful in distinguishing butterflies from moths:

1. Butterflies usually fly during the day. Moths are mostly nocturnal.
2. Butterflies are usually brightly colored. Moths are often dull in appearance.
3. Butterflies and skippers usually rest with their wings straight up over their bodies, upper surfaces together. Moths hold their wings horizontally, with the upper surface showing.
4. Butterflies have knobbed antennae. Moths most often have feathery antennae.

All members of the order Lepidoptera undergo complete metamorphosis. Their larvae, called caterpillars, are familiar sights. Most caterpillars feed on plant material, but a few are predators. Although many caterpillars have a ferocious appearance, they are generally harmless. Some, however, give off a bad smell when handled, and a few are capable of delivering a painful sting using modified body hairs.

Once a larva has matured, it forms a pupa. While most moths and skippers spin a protective silky cocoon, butterflies form instead a "naked" and often colorful pupa called a chrysalis. Most lepidopterans that have only one generation a year pupate during winter months.

After emergence from the pupal stage, adult butterflies find something to eat and search for a mate. Since most species eat nectar, flowers are always a good place to look for butterflies. After a mate has been found, eggs are laid, and the cycle of life begins anew. Most butterflies are very particular and will generally lay eggs only on plants that their offspring will eat. Some species search only for a single species of plant; others are less finicky.



Families of butterflies occurring in Mississippi

Family Papilionidae: This family includes the swallowtails and contains some of our largest and most beautiful butterflies. The largest butterflies in the world, the birdwing butterflies of southeastern Asia, belong to this family. These giants can have wingspans of up to 255 millimeters.

Family Pieridae: The white, sulphur, and orange-tip butterflies constitute some of Mississippi's more commonly seen butterflies. As is true for many families of butterflies, the common names listed above describe very well the basic colors seen in the pierids.

Family Lycaenidae: Hairstreaks and blues are fairly common at the Field Station. The two species in this guide are both small, blue to blue-gray butterflies.

Family Nymphalidae: These "brush-footed butterflies" are thus named because their front legs are often reduced and not used for walking. Many of our most common butterflies belong to this family. Most are also brightly colored, with orange, black, and warm browns being common. Their names are similarly colorful: viceroys, red admirals, mourning cloaks, and painted ladies, just to name a few.

Family Satyridae: These butterflies are dainty and often grayish brown. They also usually have some sort of eyelike spot on their wings. They are more fond of shade than are most of our butterflies.

Family Danaidae: These large and brightly colored butterflies are referred to as "milkweed butterflies." This is because their larvae almost always eat milkweed. The adults and larvae of this species are foul-tasting and are therefore safe from predators. The monarch is well-known for its long-distance migration (to central Mexico).

Family Hesperidae: Skippers, named for their fast, erratic flight, actually belong to a different superfamily than do other butterflies. Species occurring here are relatively smaller and have stouter bodies than other butterflies, but the most distinctive characteristic is the presence of a hook at the apex of the antennal club. They are diverse and common at the Field Station. Because of the similarity between groups of skipper species and the variability within some species, they present the greatest challenge for butterfly identification at the Field Station. Worn specimens and those with unusual color forms may be difficult, if not impossible, to identify in the field.



Goatweed Leafwing

(*Anaea andria*)

Wing span: 2 3/8 - 3 1/4 inches

Identification: Underside gray, producing a "dead leaf" effect when the wings are folded. The upper side is orange. Over-wintering adults tend to have more hooked front wing tips and are darker reddish orange than summer adults. **Notes:** Goatweed leafwings are most often seen along forest margins, and are one of the few species that can be observed within deciduous woods. There are two annual flight periods: one in winter and one in late summer. Actually, this is one of the most common "winter" butterflies in our area. Goatweed leafwings fly rapidly and are difficult to catch! Larvae feed on species of croton.



Gulf Fritillary

(*Agraulis vanillae*)

Wing span: 2 1/2 - 3 3/4 inches

Identification: This bright orange butterfly is distinguished by the silver spots on the under surface of its hind wings. **Notes:** This species is common over most of the eastern United States and can be found anywhere passion flower, its primary host plant, occurs. Gulf fritillaries may be seen in open areas at the Field Station from early spring through late autumn. They are most abundant in late August, and are easily observed as they visit flowers of various species of plants.





Harvester

(*Feniseca tarquinius*)

Wing span: 1 1/8 - 1 1/4 inches

Identification: Upper side orange with large black spots and with margins mostly black. Underside of hind wing brown with faint white circles. **Notes:** This is one of the few butterflies with predaceous larvae. The larvae eat woolly aphids, which are very common on alders growing along streams in this area. The adults feed on honeydew secreted by aphids, rather than flower nectar. Most are seen during late March or early April at the Field Station, and they prefer wooded habitats.



Pearl Crescent

(*Phyciodes tharos*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: Relatively small brown-and-orange butterfly, with a distinctive row of six brown spots near the margin of each hind wing. **Notes:** Pearl crescents are one of our most common butterflies. They can be found nearly anywhere around the Field Station in open areas, especially in tall grass. They are present from early spring until late autumn.



American Snout

(*Libytheana carinenta*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 2 inches

Identification: Elongated labial palps give the appearance of a "snout." Upper side brown and orange with white markings on the front wing. **Notes:** Adults perch on branches and imitate dead leaves by pointing their snouts and antennae downward. They are most common at the Field Station during May and August. Look for them along forest edges, roads, tall grass, and on mud.

Question Mark

(*Polygonia interrogationis*)

Wing span: 2 1/4 - 3 inches

Identification: Orange butterfly with black and brown markings and with purplish wing margins (1a). Can be distinguished from the eastern comma butterfly by the pearly white "question mark" on the underside of the hind wing (2a). **Notes:** Question marks are most common at the Field Station in May, but they can be seen here throughout the warmer months of the year. Summer forms tend to have very dark hind wings showing fewer markings. These butterflies are most likely to be seen in sparsely wooded areas, but are fairly hard to observe closely because they are timid and fly quickly. Adults feed on rotting fruit, dung, carrion, and tree sap. Larvae prefer leaves of elm trees.



Eastern Comma (Hop Merchant)

(*Polygonia comma*)

Wing span: 1 3/4 - 2 1/2 inches

Identification: Orange butterfly with black and brown markings, very similar to the question mark (1a), but easily distinguished from the latter by the silver "comma" on the underside of its hind wings (2a and 2b). **Notes:** Commas favor wooded areas that are near water. They are fast fliers, just like question marks, and identifying them in the field will probably require binoculars. Also like question marks, there is a summer form with much darker hind wings. Males perch on leaves or trees to watch for females. Larvae feed on nettles, hops, and elms.





Viceroy

(*Limenitis archippus*)

Wing span: 2 1/2 - 3 3/8 inches

Identification: Orange butterfly with black wing veins and margins and with a median transverse black line on the hind wing.

Notes: Viceroys are most common in August, and they visit many types of flowers in open areas around any of the ponds at the Field Station.



Monarch

(*Danaus plexippus*)

Wing span: 3 3/8 - 4 7/8 inches

Identification: Orange butterfly with black wing veins and margins, but lacking a transverse black line on the hind wings that is characteristic of the viceroy. It is considerably larger than the viceroy as well. **Notes:** Our only common milkweed butterfly, given that name because the larvae eat species of plants belonging to the milkweed family. Monarchs are one of the few butterflies that migrate through this area. They are most common at the Field Station in the fall, especially from late September through mid-October. Monarchs usually visit flowers in open areas.

American Lady

(*Vanessa virginiensis*)

Wing span: 1 3/4 - 2 5/8 inches

Identification: Mostly orange with white markings on black wing tips (front wings). Hind wings with four small eyespots on upper surface and two larger, blue eyespots on ventral surface. **Notes:** American ladies are usually found in open areas with low vegetation. They are most common at the Field Station during April and May, and are often seen feeding on flowers around the ponds. Larvae feed on thistles as well as numerous other types of plants.



Red Admiral

(*Vanessa atalanta*)

Wing span: 1 3/4 - 3 inches

Identification: Dark brown, or nearly black, butterfly with a red median band on front wing, and another red band at the apex of each hind wing. **Notes:** Red admirals are most common during the summer at the Field Station. Although they can be found in various habitats, red admirals are most often seen in open, damp fields near forests. Adults feed on tree sap (and occasionally on bird droppings).



Variiegated Fritillary

(*Euptoieta claudia*)

Wing span: 1 5/8 - 2 3/4 inches

Identification: Mostly orange on upper side, with dark veins and a row of black spots near the margins of all wings; underside of hind wings without silver spots. **Notes:** Variiegated fritillaries are most common at the Field Station from April through June, but they may be seen throughout the warmer months. Adults visit a variety of flowers.





Spicebush Swallowtail

(*Papilio troilus*)

Wing span: 3 - 4 inches

Identification: Blackish swallow-tailed butterfly; dorsal surface with small white spots along the margin of the front wings, and a blue-gray area on the hind wing; ventral surface of hind wing with two rows of orange spots. **Notes:** Males can be found searching for females in woods and along roads and forest edges. Spicebush swallowtails are most common at the Field Station during late April, although they can be found all summer visiting flowers.



Pipevine Swallowtail

(*Battus philenor*)

Wing span: 2 3/4 - 5 inches

Identification: Blackish swallow-tailed butterfly with upper surface of hind wings iridescent blue-turquoise and with one row of orange spots on ventral surface of hind wings. **Notes:** Pipevine swallowtails are most often seen as they patrol open areas around the Field Station from late March through early June. Since they are nectar feeders, adults may be found on a variety of flowers.



Red-spotted Purple

(*Limenitis arthemis*)

Wing span: 2 1/4 - 4 inches

Identification: Upper side is blue to blue-green with iridescence on the outer part of the hind wing. Distinguished from dark swallowtails by the lack of "tails," and the presence of small orange spots along the margin of the front wing dorsally. **Notes:** Two flight periods are apparent at the Field Station: May-June and August-September. Red-spotted purples are most common during the second period.

Spring Azure

(*Celastrina ladon*)

Wing span: 7/8 - 1 3/8 inches

Identification: *Male* (1a): Small butterfly with light-blue upper surface. *Female* (1b): Similar to male but with a wide black band on the front and sides of the front wings. No thin "tails" present. **Notes:** Spring azures are most active from mid-afternoon until dusk. They are most common at the Field Station between June and August, where they can be found around the edges of forest or near moist ground.



Eastern Tailed-blue

(*Everes comyntas*)

Wing span: 7/8 - 1 1/8 inches

Identification: Small, "tailed" butterfly with one narrow tail on hind wings. Upper side of male is iridescent blue; females are usually dark gray. **Notes:** This little butterfly is quite common for most of summer and fall. Individuals can be seen around the Field Station at flowers that are close to the ground or in any open, sunny place, including weedy areas and disturbed habitats.



Mourning Cloak

(*Nymphalis antiopa*)

Wing span: 2 1/4 - 4 inches

Identification: Underside is gray, giving a "dead leaf" appearance. Upper side is purplish black with wide, yellow, apical margins. Not easily confused with any other Mississippi butterfly. **Notes:** Mourning cloaks feed on tree sap. Adults live 10-11 months (pretty long for a butterfly). They are not very common at the Field Station but may be seen occasionally during much of the year. They are fast fliers and are much easier to observe than to catch.





Orange Sulphur (or Alfalfa Butterfly)

(*Colias eurytheme*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 2 3/4 inches

Identification: Color varies from mostly white to dark orange, with broad, black wing margins. Upper surface of front wing with dark spot; upper surface of rear wing with orange spot. **Notes:** Alfalfa butterfly larvae feed on clover and can sometimes be a serious pest. They are most commonly seen in late February and in late May at the Field Station and can be found in open areas around ponds.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

(*Papilio glaucus*)

Wing span: 3 5/8 - 6 1/2 inches

Identification: Large, yellow, swallow-tailed butterfly with dark tiger stripes and dark wing margins. Females occur in two color forms: one mostly yellow, like males (and most common at the Field Station); the other, darker, resembling the spicebush or pipevine. These females may be distinguished from the spicebush in that the tiger lacks the median band of orange spots on the hind wing. They differ from the pipevine in lacking the iridescent blue coloration on the dorsal surface of the hind wings, but they have an orange spot on the inner edge of the hind wings. **Notes:** Tiger swallowtails are most common in this area during late March and April. Like other species of swallowtails, they can be seen at the Field Station around any forest edges, around water, or on a variety of flowers.

Little Yellow

(*Eurema lisa*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: Small yellow butterfly with wide, dark wing margins. Under surface of front wings lack distinct black spots. **Notes:** Most easily observed on warm August days, little yellows are often seen in drier areas of the Field Station. They are plentiful along roadsides and trails, particularly in grassy areas. Adults feed on nectar and prefer white flowers.



Cloudless Sulphur

(*Phoebis sennae*)

Wing span: 2 1/4 - 3 1/8 inches

Identification: Our largest and most uniformly colored yellow butterfly. The upper surface is bright yellow, varying from orange-yellow to lemon-yellow, with very few faint markings. Ventrally, the color appears more greenish-yellow. **Notes:** Cloudless sulfurs may be seen at the Field Station during most months, but they tend to be most abundant during fall. They are usually seen flying in open areas or feeding on flowers.

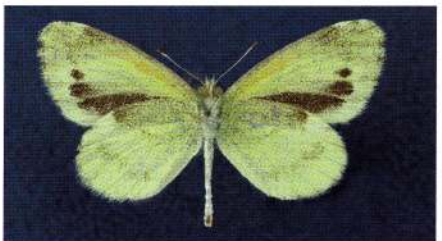


Dainty Sulphur

(*Nathalis iole*)

Wing span: 3/4 - 1 1/4 inches

Identification: This small yellow butterfly can be distinguished by the dark apex and posterior bar on its front wings. Both upper and lower surfaces have distinct black markings. **Notes:** Dainty sulphurs rest with their wings closed and held perpendicular to the sun's rays to warm themselves. Males patrol low to the ground, looking for females. They prefer open, dry places, including weedy fields, grasslands, and roads.



Falcate Orangetip

(*Anthocharis midea*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: Falcate Orangetips, while easy to identify in the field, are sexually dimorphic, and the sexes could be mistaken as separate species. *Males* (1a): White with orange tips and a black spot on front wings. *Females* (1b): White with a black spot on front wing. Both sexes are heavily marbled on the ventral surface. **Notes:** Most common at the Field Station from mid-March through April, Orangetips can be found along forest and swamp margins. Adult orangetips feed on flower nectar; larvae occur on plants in the mustard family.

White, or very lightly colored, specimens of the following species may be encountered occasionally. Check primary groups (in parentheses) for discussions.

Spring Azure: Description can be found in the blue section (2).

Checkered Skipper: Description can be found in the skippers section (3).

Alfalfa Butterfly: Description can be found in the yellow section (4).





Hackberry Emperor

(*Asterocampa celtis*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 2 1/2 inches

Identification: Brown butterfly with a row of dark spots along apex of hind wing. Front wings with apical half blackish with white spots, and with one obvious black spot near posterior, apical corner. Underside of hind wing with marginal row of seven black eyespots. **Notes:** Hackberry emperors are most likely to be seen around hackberry trees along forest edges or near water at the Field Station. They are most common during July but may be present throughout summer months. Larvae eat hackberry leaves, while adults feed on sap, rotting fruit, dung, and carrion.



Common Buckeye

(*Junonia coenia*)

Wing span: 1 5/8 - 2 3/4 inches

Identification: Dull-brown butterfly with two large prominent eyespots on each hind wing, and one large eyespot on each front wing. Front wings also have a wide cream-colored median band and several distinctive orange markings. **Notes:** Buckeyes are quite common throughout the year at the Field Station, with peak numbers appearing from late summer through the fall. They are most often seen in open, disturbed areas with low vegetation. Larvae eat plantain and toadflax, common weedy species in this area.

Little Wood Satyr

(*Megisto cymela*)

Wing span: 1 1/2 - 1 7/8 inches

Identification: A brownish-gray butterfly (1) with two prominent dark eyespots on the upper surface and under surface of each wing. **Notes:** Little wood satyrs have a characteristic slow, bouncing flight. They appear at the Field Station from March through September, but are most common in April and May. Adults feed mostly on sap and are most often seen in shaded areas along the margins of woods. Larvae of our three satyrs feed on various grasses.

Carolina Satyr

(*Hermeuptychia sosybius*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 inches

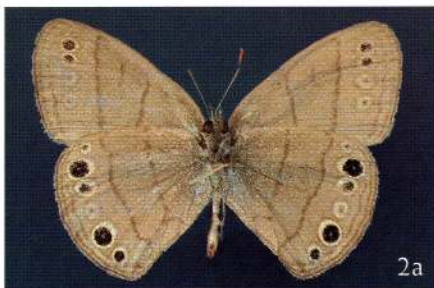
Identification: The upper surface is dingy brown with no markings (2b), but the under surface has four to six small, dark eyespots with white borders (2a). **Notes:** Carolina satyrs are common in most southern states throughout the summer and early fall. They may be seen during the day flying slowly near the forest floor, particularly in very moist areas, and are only rarely seen outside of wooded habitats.

Gemmed Satyr

(*Cyllopsis gemma*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 1 5/8 inches

Identification: The upper surface is dingy brown with no markings (2b). The underside of each hind wing has four black spots with a gray or silver patch near the distal margin (2c). On average, they are a bit larger and paler than carolina satyrs. **Notes:** Gemmed satyrs are usually found in moist grassy areas along running water. The biology of this rare species is poorly known.





Gray Hairstreak

(*Strymon melinus*)

Wing span: 7/8 - 1 3/8 inches

Identification: Small, blue-gray butterfly with a large orange spot near the base of the single, long tail on the hind wing. **Notes:** At the Field Station, gray hairstreaks occur during spring, summer, and fall months, but they seem to be most common in September. They occur in open habitats, especially around water or in weedy areas. Gray hairstreak larvae may sometimes be pests because they may bore holes in beans and cotton bolls, but they actually eat a great variety of plants.



Red-banded Hairstreak

(*Calycopis cecrops*)

Wing span: 7/8 - 1 1/4 inches

Identification: Forewing brown above, hind wing bluish above. Underside brown or gray, with single white and red transverse lines on both hind and front wings. Hind wings each with two slender tails. **Notes:** Red-banded hairstreaks are not common at the Field Station. They occur most frequently during April and May, but should be present during late summer as well. Adults may be seen visiting a variety of flowers in open areas.



Golden-banded Skipper

(*Autochton cellus*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 2 inches

Identification: Large skipper with dark brown wings (1a). Forewing with wide yellow band, and small white patch near the apex. Under surface of hind wings with distinguishing silver patch (1b). **Notes:** Quite rare in most of their territory, golden-banded skippers occur most frequently at the Field Station during April. Adults feed on nectar, so flowers that are near a forest edge or water are good places to search for one.



1a



1b

Hoary Edge

(*Achalarus lyciades*)

Wing span: 1 3/4 - 1 15/16 inches

Identification: Large skipper with a dark brown dorsal surface (1a). Center of each front wing is checkered. Under surface of hind wings with apical edge dirty white, hence the common name of the species (2). **Notes:** Hoary edges search for mates from a perch at about human eye level. They are most common in July at the Field Station and visit a variety of flowers along Puskus Creek. The blossoms of buttonbush seem to be a favorite.



2

Ocola Skipper

(*Panoquina ocola*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 1 11/16 inches

Identification: Unusually long, yellowish-brown front wings with a few light spots. **Notes:** Like most skippers, the ocola's flight is rapid and "bouncy." It is rare at the Field Station but may be seen in late summer. The ocola skipper prefers to spend its time around flowers in damp, overgrown fields.





Byssus Skipper

(*Problema byssus*)

Wing span: 1 1/2 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: *Female* (1): Upper surface of wings orange with dark-brown borders widening at the margin and the apex. A dark bar interrupts the orange cell in the front wings. *Male:* More orange than the female, lacking the anterior dark border on the front wings. **Notes:** This species is uncommon at the Field Station. Our specimen was captured in late June.

Sachem

(*Atalopedes campestris*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 5/8 inches

Identification: *Male:* Dorsal surface orange with brown border and a large dark stigma on the front wing. *Female:* Dorsal surface varies from yellow to dark brown, but a square, white spot is always at the end of the forewing. **Notes:** Sachems are fond of disturbed areas such as roadsides, pastures, lawns, and parks. They may have up to five broods annually and occur at the Field Station from March through December.

Southern Broken-dash

(*Wallengrenia otho*)

Wing span: 1 - 1 3/8 inches

Identification: *Male* (3a): Brown with orange patches, with a broken, black "dash" on the forewings. *Female:* Dorsal surface dark brown. Ventral surface reddish-brown (3b). **Notes:** Although rare, southern broken-dashes may be seen from June through the fall months at the Field Station. Males stay near to the ground when searching for females. Similarly, adults feed on flowers that are close to the ground.

Fiery Skipper

(*Hylephila phyleus*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 inches

Identification: Compare the inner "jagged" dark edge of the hind wings to the smoother edge of the whirlabout. *Male:* Dorsal surface orange with a wide black stigma on the front wings. *Female:* Dorsal surface dark brown with an irregular orange band. **Notes:** Common throughout the warmer months, fiery skippers may be seen in open areas, especially around flowers.

Whirlabout

(*Polites vibex*)

Wing span: 1 - 1 1/2 inches

Identification: Compared with the fiery skipper, the dark, marginal band on the hind wing is not "jagged." *Male (2a):* Yellow orange upper side marked with large brown or black spots. *Female:* Dorsal surface dark brown with smudged dark spots. Ventral surface is a dull greenish-gray (2b). **Notes:** Whirlabouts are named for their quick darting flight and can be observed in open areas around the Field Station throughout the summer.

Tawny-edged Skipper

(*Polites themistocles*)

Wing span: 7/8 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: Upper surface dark brown, fading to orange near the apex of the front wings. Male has a dark sinuous stigma on the front wing. Tawny-edged skippers are usually darker in color and have a smaller stigma than do crossline skippers. **Notes:** While uncommon at the Field Station, tawny-edged skippers may be seen in late August. Adults occur around moist grassy areas and clover patches where they feed on nectar.





Least Skipper

(*Ancyloxypha numitor*)

Wing span: 7/8 - 1 1/8 inches

Identification: Short antennae and stout body. Front wings orange with a wide dark border. Hind wing is more extensively orange. **Notes:** Seen in damp open areas almost all year, least skippers fly low to the ground among the grass of fields, marshes, or hillsides.

Zabulon Skipper

(*Poanes zabulon*)

Wing span: 1 3/8 - 1 5/8 inches

Identification: Stout build, short antennae. *Male* (2a): Bright orange upper surface with dark borders and no stigma. A brown and yellow patch encloses the wing base. *Female*: Dorsal surface is brown with pale spots. Ventral surface is reddish-brown with a silvery margin on the hind wing (2b). **Notes:** Zabulon skippers may be seen from late April through late summer. They dart around any openings in forest or scrubby areas, where they may be seen visiting a variety of flowers.

Little Glassywing

(*Pompeius verna*)

Wing span: 1 1/16 - 1 1/2 inches

Identification: Wings black or blackish brown. Dorsal surface of forewing (male) has a large, light dash with a yellowish dot at either end. **Notes:** Little glassywings occur during late July in the Oxford area. They can be found perched on low vegetation around forest edges and also occur commonly around the ponds at the Field Station.

Clouded Skipper

(*Lerema accius*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: Wings dark brown. Front wings usually with three light markings pointing outward near the apex. *Male:* Dark stigma on the front wings. *Female:* May have some transparent white spots. **Notes:** Males wait for females close to the ground around the edge of shaded areas. Clouded skippers are often seen at the Field Station on flowers or near water.



Swarthy Skipper

(*Nastra lherminier*)

Wing span: 1 - 1 1/8 inches

Identification: Dark yellowish-brown front wings usually have two faint light spots on the upper surface. Underside usually has pale veins, particularly on hind wings. **Notes:** Like most skippers, swarthy skippers can be seen bouncing along close to the ground in search of flowers or a mate. Swarthy skippers are most often seen in sandy areas where flowers are present. They are not common at the Field Station but may be seen during spring or late summer.



Horace's Duskywing

(*Erynnis boratius*)

Wing span: 1 7/16 - 1 15/16 inches

Identification: Large, uniform, dark-brown skipper, with fewer light markings than Juvenal's duskywing. **Notes:** Horace's duskywings frequent oak forest edges. Adults feed on a variety of low-to-the-ground flowers.





Juvenal's Duskywing

(*Erynnis juvenalis*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 15/16 inches

Identification: Dorsal surface of male is brown with clear spots, indistinct dark markings, and scattered white hairs (not apparent to the unaided eye). Usually, there is a pale marking on the hind wing apex, which is not present in Horace's. **Notes:** Males patrol for females from 3 feet to 12 feet above the forest floor. This species is most common at the Field Station during April, where adults can be seen feeding on a variety of flowers.

Sleepy Duskywing

(*Erynnis brizo*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 3/4 inches

Identification: Front wing with broad bands on dorsal surface. **Notes:** You will have the most luck finding sleepy duskywings at the Field Station from March through June. Males perch in clearings and on hilltops throughout the day. Adults feed on nectar and occur most often in oak scrub or oak/pine scrub.

Crossline Skipper

(*Polites origenes*)

Wing span: 1 1/8 - 1 1/2 inches

Identification: Dark brown with orange markings. *Male* (3a): Has a long dark stigma on the front wing that narrows near the wing base. *Female*: Upper and lower surfaces dingy brown. Under surface of hind wing with a faint, dotted postmedian band (3b). **Notes:** Crossline skippers can be seen from July through August in open grassy areas around the Field Station. Adults seem to prefer white flowers and often hang upside down from their nectar source.

Northern Cloudywing

(*Thorybes pylades*)

Wing span: 1 1/4 - 1 7/8 inches

Identification: Dark brown; light spots on front wing are small and not aligned. **Notes:** Northern cloudywings can be found at the Field Station from April through June. Males spend their days perching in scrubby areas waiting for a mate or flying around the edge of the woods looking for their favorite nectar source — flowers with a blue hue.



Southern Cloudywing

(*Thorybes bathyllus*)

Wing span: 1 5/16 - 1 7/8 inches

Identification: Dark brown; forewing has longer white markings than are typically found on northern cloudywings. **Notes:** Southern cloudywings are usually seen perching just off the ground in July and August. Like northern cloudywings, they enjoy bluish flowers and are found most frequently in open areas where food plants are abundant.



Common Checkered Skipper

(*Pyrgus communis*)

Wing span: 1 - 1 1/2 inches

Identification: Checkered blue-gray and white upper surface. **Notes:** Common checkered skippers enjoy open, sunny places with low vegetation, especially any flowering plants. Checkered skippers are most common at the Field Station in mid-October, but may be seen anytime from late summer through the fall months.



Additional butterfly references

The following Web site is comprehensive with respect to the butterflies of the United States. It contains beautiful photographs of most species of butterflies and is searchable by state.

Butterflies of North America

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/bflyusa.htm>

Produced by P.A. Opler, H. Pavulaan, and R.E. Stanford (coordinators). 1995. *Butterflies of North America*. Jamestown, North Dakota: Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Home Page.

Useful books and field guides

Glassberg, J. 1999. *Butterflies through binoculars: A field guide to butterflies of eastern North America*. New York: Oxford University Press. 242 pp., 71 color plates.

Opler, P.A. and V. Malikul. 1992. *Peterson field guide to the eastern butterflies*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 396 pp.

Scott, J.A. 1986. *The butterflies of North America*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 583 pp.

For younger butterfly enthusiasts

Mitchell, R.T. and H.S. Zim. 2001. *Butterflies and moths: A guide to the more common American species (Golden Guide)*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 160 pp.

The most complete list of Mississippi species

Mather, B. and K. Mather. 1958. *The butterflies of Mississippi*. *Tulane Studies in Zoology* 6: 63-109.

This paper includes notes on distribution, relative abundance, and seasonality of 122 species of butterflies.

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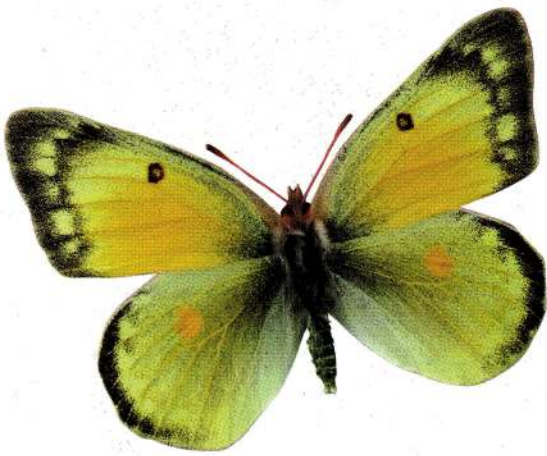
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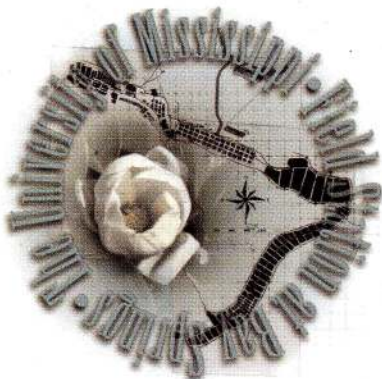


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