

# Wasatch Butterflies



Todd L. Stout

Utah Bug Club

# WASATCH BUTTERFLIES

Todd L. Stout

todd\_stout29@hotmail.com

<http://www.raisingbutterflies.org/about-me>

## Introduction:

Excerpts from this text are taken from ***Utah Butterfly Basics*** (in press), which will provide an overview of common Northern Utah butterflies. This booklet discusses what common butterflies may be found Northern Utah's Wasatch Canyons from early spring through early fall.

## March

There is a group of what we call brushfoot butterflies called anglewings and tortoiseshells which are unique in that they spend the winter as an adult butterfly, having emerged the previous fall. These butterflies include the mourning cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*), milbert's tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis milberti*), California tortoiseshell, (*Nymphalis californica*), satyr comma (*Polygonia satyrus*), hoary comma (*Polygonia gracilis zephyrus*), and less commonly, the green comma (*Polygonia faunus hylas*).

In the late winter, on sunny, 50+ degree days, some of these butterflies will break hibernation and fly along canyon roads and creeks or in our valley floors!

With exception of the mourning cloak, these butterflies emerged early the previous fall from higher elevations and worked their way down the canyon towards lower elevations where temperatures remained warmer for a longer period of time. As spring progresses, these butterflies will return to higher elevations to mate and repeat their life cycle.



**Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*)** Flies along water courses in valleys and mountains throughout the state appearing the first warm days of late winter.



**California Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis californica*)** Flies in the lower canyons in early spring working its way to higher elevations in mid summer.



**California Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis californica*)** Ventral surface pictured.



**Milbert's Tortoiseshell**  
*(Nymphalis milberti furcillata)*  
Flies in the valley floors near rivers during the summer. This temporal migrator is equally at home at the canyon mouths in April, mid-elevation canyons in June and the tops of the mountains in August.



**Milbert's Tortoiseshell** (*Nymphalis milberti furcillata*) Ventral surface pictured.



**Satyr Comma** (*Polygonia satyrus satyrus*) Can be found in mountain canyons from March until June. A fresh generation appears from July to September.



**Satyr Comma** (*Polygonia satyrus satyrus*) Picture of male ventral surface.



**Hoary Comma** (*Polygonia gracilis zephyrus*) Can be found in mountain canyons from spring until June. A fresh generation appears from high elevation during August and September.



**Hoary Comma** (*Polygonia gracilis zephyrus*) Underside view. (Also known as the ventral surface.)

## April

Just as the tortoiseshell and anglewing adult butterflies break hibernation and fly during March, many other species of butterflies that spent the winter as a chrysalis, will emerge as adult butterflies during the months of April and May.

These butterflies include the anise swallowtail, (*Papilio zelicaon nitra*), spring white (*Pontia sisymbri*), southern rocky mountain orangetip (*Anthocharis julia browningi*), large marble (*Euchloe ausonides coloradensis*), silvery blue (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus oro*), thistle crescent (*Phyciodes mylitta mylitta*), and gray hairstreak (*Strymon melinus franki*). Also, the yellow sulphur (*Colias philodice eriphyle*) flies in late April.

Towards the end of April, skippers such as the rocky mountain duskywing (*Erynnis telemachus*), sleepy duskywing (*Erynnis brizo burgessi*), afranius duskywing, (*Erynnis afranius*), checkered skipper (*Pyrgus communis*), and the juba skipper (*Hesperia juba*) also start flying along with the spring azure, (*Celastrina ladon echo*). About a week or so later, one might find patrolling

males of the very large two tailed swallowtail (*Papilio multicaudatus pusillus*) patrol gracefully up and down the canyons.



**Anise Swallowtail (*Papilio zelicaon nitra*)** Flies near mountain canyon trails and hillsides



**Spring White (*Pontia sisymbri*)** Flies near mountain canyon trails and hillsides during the latter part of April.



**Large Marble (*Euchloe ausonides coloradensis*)** Flies along dry ravines and mountainsides in mid April.



**Southern Rocky Mountain Orangetip (*Anthocharis julia browningi*)** Males patrol canyon trails and washes in search of females.



**Southern Rocky Mountain Orangetip (*Anthocharis julia browningi*)** Females are less noticeable and can be found mostly in May.



**Silvery Blue (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus oro*)** Flies in ravines and dry gullies in lower canyons during the middle of April. Females lay eggs on *Hedysarum boreale*.



**Gray Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus franki*)** Multiple flights starting in April and ending in September. Caterpillars can be found on *Astragalus* or *Hedysarum* blooms in the spring and *Eriogonum racemosum* blooms in the fall.



**Thistle Crescent (*Phyciodes mylitta mylitta*)** Flies in ravines and dry gullies in lower canyons during the middle of April. Larvae feed on thistles.



**Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)** Migrates into Northern Utah on a limited to massive basis every spring. Equally at home in mountain canyons as well as city parks and agricultural areas where their caterpillars feed on thistles.



**Sleepy Duskywing (*Erynnis brizo burgessi*)** Males patrol dry washes in lower canyons in late April and May.



**Rocky Mountain Duskywing (*Erynnis telemachus*)** Males patrol and perch in dry washes.



**Afranius Duskywing (*Erynnis afranius*)** This butterfly has three flights in canyons where Utah sweetvetch (*Hedysarum boreale*) grows.



**Juba Skipper (*Hesperia juba*)** Males quickly dart and land around ravines, trails, dry washes, and dirt roads in lower canyons during the middle of April. Males fly so fast that it is sometimes hard to keep your eye on them.



**Northern Cloudywing (*Thorybes pylades*)** This dark skipper appears in late April and early May in our canyons and looks like duskywings in flight. The lesser amount of gray markings on the dorsal forewing will distinguish it. Its larvae feed on Sweet Clover.



**Common Checkered Skipper (*Pyrgus communis*)** Males quickly fly around ravines, trails, and dry washes in canyons. Caterpillars feed on cheese weed (*Malva neglecta*.)



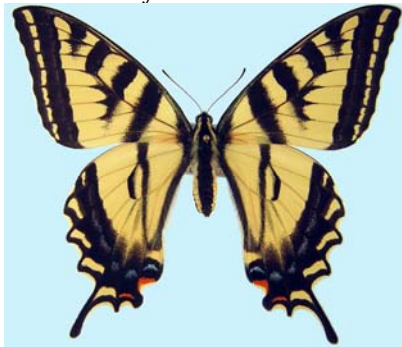
**Two Tailed Swallowtail (*Papilio multicaudatus pusillus*)** Males of this very large butterfly fly along mountain streams and city streets lined with ash trees from May to July. Females lay eggs on choke cherries in Wasatch Canyons.



**Two Tailed Swallowtail (*Papilio multicaudatus pusillus*)** Female is pictured.



**Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus rutulus*)** Males patrol along moist mountain canyons between May and August. This butterfly might be rare at Wasatch Canyons; but more common at higher elevations.



**Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus rutulus*)** Female pictured.



**Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*)** Males patrol along mountainous canyons and sometimes dry gullies from late May and July. The larvae feed on a plant that grows at roughly 7000' to 9500' (*Ceanothus velutinus*)



**Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*)** Female pictured.

## May

Soon after the two tailed swallowtail starts flying, other butterflies that appear during the month of May might include the western tailed blue (*Everes amyntula*), field crescent (*Phyciodes pulchellus camillus*), common ringlet (*Coenonympha tullia brenda*), and clodius parnassian (*Parnassius clodius menetriesi*).



**Western Tailed Blue (*Everes amyntula*)** Males fly in isolated colonies along hillsides in association with its larval food plant--*Lathyrus*.



**Western Tailed Blue (*Everes amyntula*)** Female



**Clodius Parnassian (*Parnassius clodius menetriesi*)** Males fly along hillsides and near canyons from mid-May to June.



**Field Crescent (*Phyciodes pulchellus camillus*)** Flies in canyons and gullies during the spring and summer months. Larvae feed on blue aster.



**Field Crescent (*Phyciodes pulchellus camillus*)** Female is pictured.



**Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon echo*)** Flies in association with choke cherries and can be found in late April into May.



**Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon echo*)** Female is pictured.



**Common Ringlet (*Coenonympha tullia brenda*)** The hop flight of this and other satyrid butterflies is somewhat different. Adults start appearing in mid-May.



**Common Ringlet (*Coenonympha tullia brenda*)** Female ventral surface is pictured.

## June

In June, species that may start flying in our canyons include the western tiger swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus rutulus*), pale swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*), coronis fritillary (*Speyeria coronis snyderi*), callippe fritillary (*Speyeria callippe harmonia*), and the weidemeyer's admiral (*Limenitis weidemeyeri latifascia*). You may find great spangled fritillaries (*Speyeria cybele letona*); but, they tend to prefer higher elevations in the Wasatch Mountains. A fresh emergence of mourning cloaks can also be seen in June.



**Weidemeyer's Admiral (*Limenitis weidemeyeri latifascia*)** Males patrol and perch along mountainous canyons and dry gullies that have willow between May and July. Scarcely flies along valley floor rivers as well.



**Weidemeyer's Admiral (*Limenitis weidemeyeri latifascia*)** Male ventral surface. Larvae feed on willows, poplars, choke cherries, and aspens.



**Callippe Fritillary (*Speyeria callippe harmonia*)** One of the first fritillaries to emerge in late May and early June. The green coloration of the ventral hind wing disc makes this fritillary unique compared to others in the state.



**Callippe Fritillary (*Speyeria callippe harmonia*)** Male ventral surface.



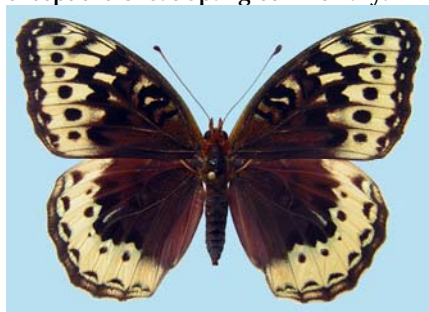
**Coronis Fritillary (*Speyeria coronis snyderi*)** Males appear a few days after Callippe Fritillaries; but females remain scarce almost until fall. The adults of this fritillary are larger than all others that fly in the Wasatch Front; except the Great Spangled Fritillary.



**Coronis Fritillary (*Speyeria coronis snyderi*)** The ventral surface markings on this male are superficially similar to the Zerene Fritillary; but the Coronis Fritillary is larger.



**Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cybele letona*)** Male dorsal surface.



**Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cybele letona*)** Female dorsal surface.



**Taxiles Skipper (*Poanes taxiles*)** Males emerge in late June and patrol and perch along trails near waterways

## July

Towards the latter part of June and into July, other species of fritillaries begin to fly and may visit Wasatch Canyons. These include the great basin fritillary (*Speyeria egleis utahensis*), northwestern fritillary (*Speyeria hesperis wasatchia*), and great spangled fritillary (*Speyeria cybele letona*). The great basin wood nymph (*Cercyonis sthenele masoni*) also starts flying in and around the oaks as well as the taxiles skipper (*Poanes taxiles*).



**Great Basin Fritillary (*Speyeria egleis utahensis*)** Starts flying in our canyons in mid-June.



**Great Basin Fritillary (*Speyeria egleis utahensis*)** The color of the ventral hind wing disc on this fritillary is rusty brown with small patches of tannish coloration.



**Northwestern Fritillary (*Speyeria hesperis wasatchia*)** Males are more common in Wasatch Canyons at roughly 7,000 feet and may be uncommon at Wasatch Canyons.



**Northwestern Fritillary (*Speyeria hesperis wasatchia*)** The color of the ventral hind wing disc is much darker red as compared to the Great Basin Fritillary.



**Zerene Fritillary (*Speyeria zerene platina*)** The Zerene Fritillary can be quite common at mid-elevation Wasatch Canyons and may be scarce at Wasatch Canyons.



**Zerene Fritillary (*Speyeria zerene platina*)** The silver spots on the ventral hind wing disc of the Zerene Fritillary are larger than on the Hesperis or Great Basin Fritillaries.



**Great Basin Wood Nymph (*Cercyonis sthenele masoni*)** (Male pictured). This butterfly begins flying in early July and continues into August and September.



**Great Basin Wood Nymph (*Cercyonis sthenele masoni*)** (Female pictured). Females of the great basin wood nymph are more common in August and September.



**Great Basin Wood Nymph (*Cercyonis sthenele masoni*)** (Female ventral surface pictured.)



## August-September

Towards the end of July, it is possible that you might locate adults of the Colorado hairstreak (*Hypaurotis crysalus citima*). This breathtaking butterfly does not frequently come to nectar; but, can be found dancing around the tops of scrub oaks. Unlike other summer butterflies, this butterfly can sometimes be found still flying towards dusk.

Another butterfly that can be extremely common towards the latter end of August through September and into October is the woodland skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides napa*.) This skipper may visit some blooming flowers at the Wasatch Canyons during this timeframe.



**Colorado Hairstreak (*Hypaurotis crysalus citima*)**  
Male pictured. Flies in close proximity to its larval host plants—scrub oak (*Quercus gambellii*)



**Colorado Hairstreak (*Hypaurotis crysalus citima*)** Female pictured.



**Colorado Hairstreak (*Hypaurotis crysalus citima*)** Female underside pictured.



**Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides napa*)** Male pictured. This skipper emerges in the mouths of canyons in late August and can be very commonly found on flowers in September, October, up to hard freeze.



**Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides napa*)** Female pictured.



**Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides napa*)** Male ventral surface pictured.

One of the delectable blooming wildflowers growing near the mouth of canyons along the Wasatch Front in September is redroot buckwheat (*Eriogonum racemosum*). Unlike other butterflies that frequent our canyons during the spring and summer months, the spalding blue butterfly (*Euphilotes spaldingi*) does not emerge from its chrysalis until the redroot buckwheat is nearly in bloom in late August through September. Also, females of the gray hairstreak (*Strymon melinus franki*) also will lay eggs on

*Eriogonum racemosum*. Larvae of both species of butterflies can be found on the blooms of *E. racemosum* throughout most of September.

Another butterfly that can be occasionally found in canyons in Utah and Salt Lake County is the Arizona Sister. Populations of this butterfly tend to become less common the further north you venture. The furthest north I have found this butterfly is in Farmington Canyon in Davis County.



**Spalding Blue (*Euphilotes spaldingi*)** Male pictured. This butterfly flies in Wasatch Canyons in association with *Eriogonum racemosum*.



**Spalding Blue (*Euphilotes spaldingi*)** Female pictured.



**Spalding Blue (*Euphilotes spaldingi*)** Male ventral surface is pictured.



**Arizona Sister (*Adelpha eulalia*)** Female pictured. This gorgeous butterfly is not as common in Northern Utah as it is Southern Utah; but can be found occasionally flying in gullies and ravines in late August through September. Caterpillars feed on scrub oak.



**The Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)** Migrates to Northern Utah from Mexico and California. Occasional adults may be found in Canyons along the Wasatch Front if there is larval host milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) nearby. This butterfly is mostly located in Russian olive groves near agricultural areas.



**Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*)** Introduced from Europe, the cabbage white can be a dominant butterfly in Salt Lake Valley as well as in the mouths of our canyons from April through October. Larvae feed on broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage as well as native and invasive mustards.



**Yellow Sulphur (*Colias philodice eriphyle*)** Populations of this butterfly come from alfalfa fields or from canyons where larvae feed on alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), sweet clover (*Melilotus officinalis*), or other legumes.



**Yellow Sulphur (*Colias philodice eriphyle*)** Female is pictured.



**Yellow Sulphur (*Colias philodice eriphyle*)** Female (albinic form) is pictured.

## Utah Organizatons Dedicated to Butterflies:

- Utah Bug Club <http://www.utahbugclub.org>
- Utah Lepidopterists' Society <http://www.utahlepsociety.org>
- Utah Butterfly Field Trips 