

Common North American Butterflies

There is a wide range of butterfly species in North America. In this one continent alone, you may find several hundred species of butterfly. Let's examine a few of the most common of these North American butterflies.

One of the most recognizable species is the monarch butterfly. It may be found throughout the United States, as well as the southern portion of Canada. The caterpillars of this species eat milkweed plants exclusively.

Since there are toxins in milkweed, predators will not eat monarch larvae or butterflies. They mostly tend to live in more open, sunnier places, especially meadows which are filled with weeds. Common milkweed, dogbane, and scarlet milkweed are examples of the kinds of milkweed on which these butterflies choose to live. The adults of the species feed on the nectar of coneflowers, beggarticks, black-eyed Susan, New England aster, goldenrod, and a variety of thistle.

Another of the most well-known butterflies in the U.S. is the Eastern tiger swallowtail. It is usually found among forests and near streams, but it can also be seen around blooming bushes such as those in city gardens. Flowers with much nectar are especially attractive. Males tend to be yellow with black markings, and the females are either black or yellow. They typically breed on cottonwood, birch, cherry, willow, poplar, or other such broadleaf trees. Phlox and milkweed tend to be their favorite flowers for nectar.

You will typically find the painted lady butterfly laying its eggs on asters or thistle. It's one of the most common species of butterfly in the world, located throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. Goldenrod seems to be a favorite of theirs for feeding. Butterfly bushes are also typically attractive to them.

One of the most common ground-dweller butterflies is the red-spotted purple. They stay low, toward the ground, and land on either the ground itself or on low branches. They have an appearance similar to the poisonous butterfly called the pipevine swallowtail.

Red-spotted purple butterflies breed on poplars, willows, apple and cherry trees, aspens, and hawthorns. They feed on azaleas, thistles, petunias, lilac, butterfly bush, phlox, lupines, and bergamot, to name a few.

The pipevine swallowtail has an iridescent blue shade on its wings, making it very beautiful. The trees they use for egg-laying, and the flowers they choose for nectar, are

Another very common butterfly is the cabbage white. It's quite small, and is predictably white in color, without many markings. It tends to lay its eggs on broccoli, cabbage, nasturtiums, and radishes.

A particularly hardy butterfly is the mourning cloak butterfly, native to both North America and all of Eurasia. They are dark red in color and have a yellowish border along the edges of their wings. There is also a dark band on the wings containing brighter blue spots. They raise their caterpillars on aspens, willows, elms, paper birch trees, and cottonwoods.

The adult butterflies typically live on rotting fruit and sap, but flower nectar may also attract them for feeding. If you want to appeal to particular species of butterfly, then you'll have to supply them both with the food which the adults prefer and a good location to put their eggs.

About the Author

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