



Spring Azure

(aka Echo Blue, *Celastrina argiolus*)

One of the first butterflies seen in spring, the Spring Azure is widespread and long-lasting. Males are solid-colored blue; females are blue with black borders.

Clodious Parnassian (*Parnassius clodius claudiannus*)

A common summer butterfly, the Clodious Parnassian has whitish, almost transparent wings that never fail to impress first-time viewers. You'll often see adults nectaring on clover, asters, and blackberries.



An anomaly on the prairie, the **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*) is not native to this region, but is sometimes spotted here. If you see this orange and black butterfly on the prairie, revel in knowing that it has traveled great distances to get here and probably has far to go to its winter location. There has been a recent increase in monarch sightings, which may be the result of butterflies grown for school projects or wedding releases.



Please use binoculars to view butterflies; collection with nets is only permitted for approved education or research projects. For information on volunteering at Mima Mounds, please contact Birdie Davenport, 360-596-5144 or 360-789-5754. To learn more about local prairies, visit www.southsoundprairies.org

The primary resource for thorough information on Northwestern butterflies is *The Butterflies of Cascadia*, by Robert Michael Pyle. This guide is greatly indebted to Mr. Pyle's book.

All photos credited to Rod Gilbert, except for the Sonoran Sparrow, by Tom Murray, and the Silvery Blue by David Hepp. Cover shot of the Anise Swallowtail also by David Hepp.

Guide by Colleen O'Shea



Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve Butterfly Guide

Butterflies at Mima Mounds

Butterflies enchant prairie visitors with their vibrant colors and apparent delicateness. The open grasslands of Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve abound in sweet wildflowers that attract a multitude of butterflies. As a result, the prairie is full of winged species that have come to depend on the prairie for their survival. Butterflies require two main things that the prairie can supply: a host plant that serves as a food source for caterpillars (larvae), and nectar sources for adults.

You can begin to see butterfly activity in the spring, and on through early fall. The best times to view butterflies are at mid-morning or mid-afternoon. During periods of hot weather, the butterflies will be out earlier in the morning. The following guide includes descriptions of butterflies at Mima Mounds prairie, and aims to help you to identify and enjoy what you might see.

Some butterfly species are very sensitive to any changes in habitat, resulting in a careful management dance between restoring prairie habitat and not disturbing current butterfly populations. Work is being done to improve habitat that may allow populations of rare butterflies to flourish at Mima Mounds in the future. As prairie visitors, we should all try to step lightly to avoid disturbing any of our winged friends.



Large Wood Nymph (*Cercyonis pegala*)

The Large Wood Nymph is on the wing from mid-May through to the cold season. Recognize it by its waltzing flight pattern and brown wings featuring black eyespots on the male, or black eyespots ringed with gold on the female. Its host plants are grasses; thistle and brambles are its nectar sources. Observe the low-lying parts of the prairie landscape; males often fly in those areas looking for females.



Ochre Ringlet aka Common Ringlet

(*Coenonympha tullia*)

As its name suggests, this common butterfly is ochre-colored, with subtle hints of light yellow and light orange. The velvety Ochre Ringlet usually has more than one brood per year and uses different types of grasses as host plants. The Ochre Ringlet will use what it can for nectar sources, including aster. Look for this butterfly from late March through October, with



a peak in May and then late August.

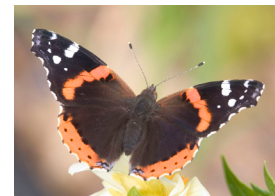
Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

The impressively colored Painted Lady lives in all types of habitats. You can search for this fast-flying species from early April to November. Look for it sunning itself with wings spread; it has blended orange and brown in the center of the outer wing, then black with white spots on the wing tips. It is migratory, though, so you might only see it every few years.



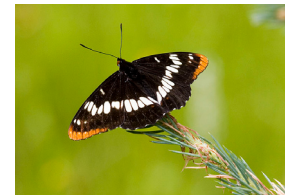
Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta rubria*)

Colored brown or charcoal, with a scarlet band and white spots, this butterfly is known for dancing around right before sunset. Red Admiral larvae use stinging nettles as host plants. Nectar sources include ox-eye daisy, thistle, and fireweed.



Lorquin's Admiral (*Limnitis lorquini burrisoni*)

The often-seen Lorquin's Admiral is on the wing from mid-February to October. It is easily recognizable: predominantly black with a cream-colored band. The male is known for setting up a territory in a tree branch and swooping at whatever moves nearby (in hopes that it is a female butterfly). Willows and serviceberry are some of its host plants; yarrow and thistle are a few of its nectar sources.





Western Meadow Fritillary

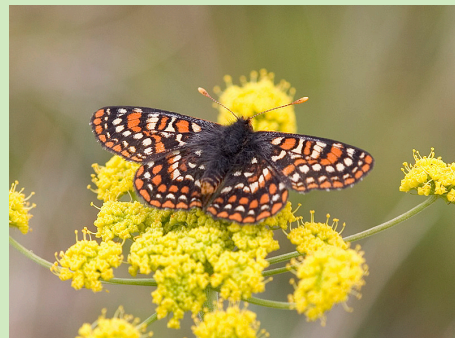
(*Boloria epithore chermocki*)

This bright butterfly is usually seen on the prairie from late April through May. It is recognizable by its orange coloring; its wings have a camouflage blend of orange hues on its underside, and may have lavender or brown mottling toward the tips. It uses violets as host plants, and likes to use strawberries, blackberries, and cinquefoil as nectar sources.

Zerene Fritillary aka Valley Silverspot

(*Speyeria zerene bremnerii*)

This species is extinct in the Willamette Valley, so it is critical to ensure that it has a viable habitat in the South Sound prairies. The Zerene Fritillary is a **candidate endangered species** in Washington, but you might see it flying here at Mima. It is a larger butterfly with a brown body and highly decorated wings: brown with light spotting, or reddish orange with brown. It uses violets as a host plant. Composites, thistles, and brambles comprise its nectar sources.



Taylor's Checkerspot

(*Euphydryas editha taylori*)

Accounting for the decline in Taylor's checkerspot populations is a high priority for scientists. These colorful butterflies once ranged the Puget prairies, the San Juan islands, and the straights of Juan de Fuca, but the butterfly is now a **state endangered species and federal candidate**. Their larval food is

paintbrush and plantains. Adults get nectar from lomatium and camas. At Mima, Taylor's Checkerspots are extirpated and have not been sighted in recent years.

Mardon Skipper

(*Polites mardon*)

The Mardon Skipper is a **federal candidate endangered species** and is listed as **endangered** in Washington. It is small with compact wings, and is colored orange and brown. Adults use violets and vetch as nectar sources, while larvae feed on grasses. Mardons used to be present at Mima Mounds, but have not been seen here for many years.

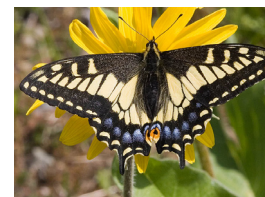


Sonoran Skipper (*Polites sonora*)

As a result of prairie land shrinking from to development, this species is now rare on the prairie. You might find it flying from late May to late August. Look for a small, light brown butterfly dappled with buttery yellow or orange dots. Larvae feed on different grasses; adults glean nectar from a variety of sources.

Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides*)

The Woodland Skipper's preferred habitat is open spaces and fringes of woodlands. This frequently sighted butterfly measures less than an inch and has a range of tawny tones on its rounded wings. One explanation for the Woodland Skipper's profusion is its use of nectar sources not typically tapped by butterflies, such as oxeye daisy. It uses grasses as host plants.



Anise Swallowtail (*Papilio zelicaon*)

This butterfly can be seen in habitats across the state. Peak viewing times on the prairie are in May and July-August. The swallowtail uses a range of plants as nectar sources, from camas to columbine, lupine to yarrow. Its host plants include spring gold and yampah. You can recognize this butterfly by its mosaic-like wings: yellow insets ringed by black "panes," and a row of bluish insets on the edges of the hind wings.



Pale Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*)

This species is on the wing from mid-April through October. The Pale Tiger Swallowtail closely resembles its mammalian namesake, with beige and black-colored vertical striping. Host plants for Pale Tigers include alder, cascara, and oceanspray; nectar sources can be toothwort and Columbia lilies.

Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*)

A colorful and familiar species, the Western Tiger Swallowtail resembles the Anise Swallowtail, with its yellow coloring and black bands. It has blue, orange, and red half circles at the interior spot where the wings meet. You can spot the Western Tiger Swallowtail from mid-April through September. Aspen and willows are some of its host plants; balsam root, columbine, and yarrow are a few of its nectar sources.



Sara's Orangetip (*Anthocharis sara flora*)

Sara's Orangetip is a common but distinctive prairie inhabitant. Both genders have black bodies, but the male has white wings with orange tips, while the female is yellow with orange-tipped wings. You can spot this butterfly in mid-spring. It uses mustard as its host plant, and gets nectar from strawberries and dandelions.

Brown Elfin (*Incisalia angustinus iroides*)

This is a versatile butterfly that survives in many locations, including oak woodland borders and clearings. The Brown Elfin uses a range of host plants, from kinnikinnick to salal. Strawberry is its nectar source. It is a smaller butterfly with rounded wings, and its coloring can be sienna to a sandy brown. You can see this species flying from mid-March through late July.



Hoary Elfin (*Incisalia polia obscura*)

This species is very attached to kinnikinnick, and will frequently be seen flying low around patches of it from late March to early June. Additionally, the chrysalis overwinters on kinnikinnick. The Hoary Elfin measures slightly less than an inch; it has dusty brown wings with borders speckled in white.

Puget Blue

(*Icaricia icarioides blackmorei*)

The Puget Blue is a **state candidate endangered species**, found only in the South Puget Sound prairies and Sequim prairies. This velvety blue butterfly will only be seen in springtime and can be identified by the diffuse spots on the underside of its wings, which differ from the Silvery Blue's distinct spots. Puget Blues exclusively use lupines as host plants. Lupines do well on prairies, but also on disturbed sites, such as by railroads. The butterflies have a hard time surviving in such rough sites, and thus they must cling to undisturbed areas on the prairies where lupines still thrive. Puget Blues use a variety of white and yellow composites as nectar sources.



Silvery Blue (*Glaucopsyche hydamus columbia*)

Seeing a Silvery Blue on the prairie is a sure sign of spring. It has an long on-the-wing season, from March and going through June. The butterfly has dusty gray undersides, and is startlingly blue on top, with a black border and a fine white fringe. It uses lupines as host plants, as well as other legumes. It is opportunistic about nectar sources; you can see it flying in camas, among many others. It sometimes flies with Puget Blues.

Great Spangled Fritillary aka Puget Sound Silverspot

(*Speyeria cybele pugetensis*)

The Great Spangled is a large and colorful butterfly. Males and females have markedly different coloring: males have bright orange wings with black spotting, and tawny bodies; females have a coffee and cream coloring, with brown extending from the body and terminating in a spotted cream border. It uses violets as host plants and can be seen flitting around the purple flowers from early June to August. (Upper photo: female; lower: male)

