

Common Butterflies Found in the Pollinator Garden

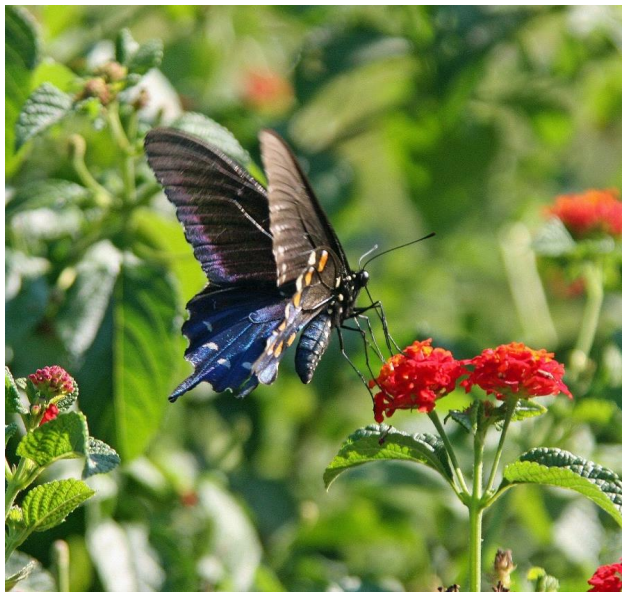
Sarah Rayner, Youth Education Coordinator

The butterflies in this are common to the Pollinator Garden at the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens and throughout the surrounding areas. The butterflies are attracted to the nectar in flowers that they use as an energy source. If host plant(s) specific to the butterflies are available in the gardens, the butterflies may deposit eggs on the leaves of their host plants. The caterpillars, also known as larvae, can feed on the leaves and at some point pupate, and emerge as an adult butterfly. Many of the butterflies described by Dr. Chrissy Mogren in “Louisiana Native Pollinator Trees”, will visit the Pollinator Garden to nectar on flowers for energy, but carry out their life cycles laying eggs on host specific pollinator trees in the forest.



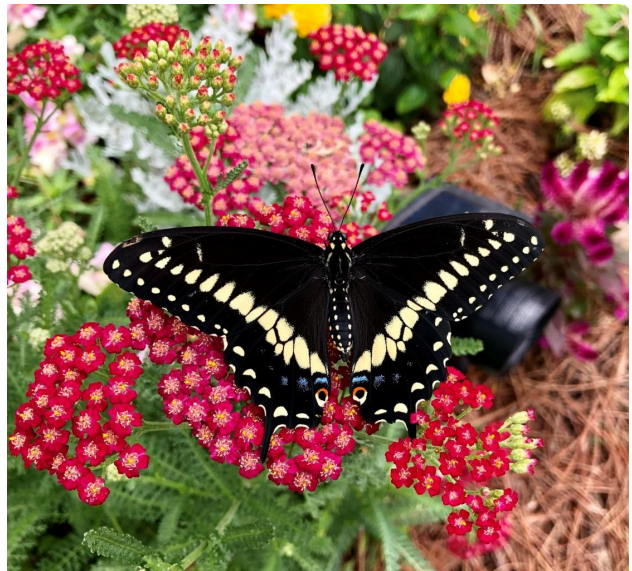
Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*, Papilionidae)

This butterfly is common in the Southern U.S., and is named after its host plant, the pipevine plant. The leaves of the pipevine plant (*Aristolochia species*) are toxic to many predators, so as the caterpillar eats the plant it absorbs the toxins and in turn becomes toxic to its own predators. Other butterflies like the black form of the female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, the Black Swallowtail and Spicebush Swallowtail will mimic the Pipevine Swallowtail to gain protection. The male Pipevine Swallowtail has a striking metallic blue hindwing and forewings that are a dull, blackish color. The females are much duller in appearance and lack the iridescent blue sheen on their hindwings. The underside of the hindwings has a row of seven large, orange spots surrounded by a black ring. The female butterfly will lay her eggs in small clusters of up to twenty eggs. They like a wide range of open habitats, woodland edges, and open woodlands.



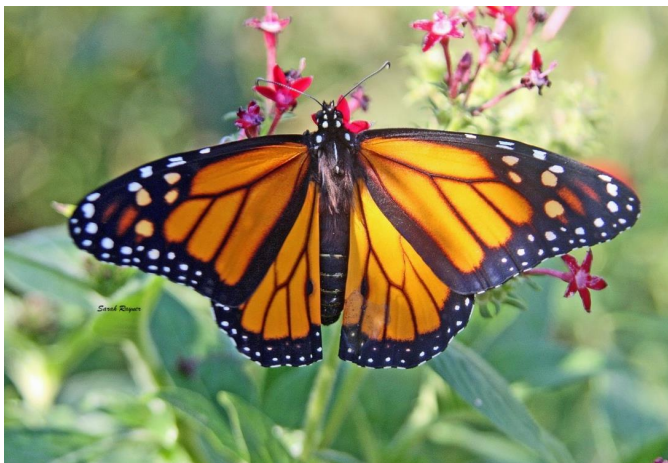
Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*, Papilionidae)

The Black Swallowtail caterpillar feeds on a variety of host plants including parsley, dill, fennel, and carrot. The adult butterfly is a very common garden butterfly, seen in southern gardens from spring to fall. The Black Swallowtail is predominately black in color. Males are mostly black with a bright yellow spots found along the edge of the wings and has a bright yellow band across both wings. The yellow sub marginal band is reduced to small spots on the female's forewings and is replaced by blue scaling along the hindwing. Males have a much less prominent blue area. Both sexes have a red spot with a black bullseye on the inner hind margin of the hindwings.



Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*, Nymphalidae)

The Monarch butterfly is probably the best known of the butterflies. Monarch butterflies are migrating butterflies that spend their winter in Oyamel Fir trees in the mountains of Mexico and in some parts of Southern California. If the monarch lives in the Eastern U.S., usually east of the Rocky Mountains, it may migrate to Mexico to overwinter. In Florida, the butterflies will migrate back and forth along the east coast, overwintering in Florida. Monarch butterflies that are west of the Rocky Mountains will overwinter in and around Pacific Grove, California in eucalyptus trees. It is the fourth generation of Monarch butterflies that can migrate up to 2,500 miles each season. The only host plant for the Monarch is milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.). The female Monarch butterfly will deposit her eggs on the underside of the milkweed leaves. Habitat conservation, restoration and the planting of native milkweed is recommended to protect Monarch populations. The Monarch caterpillar is toxic to most insects and birds if eaten. The milkweed contains toxic steroids, known as cardenolides. The larvae will consume and use the cardenolides as a defense against predators. Their bright orange coloration is used to warn predators of the bad taste and toxicity of both the larvae and adults.



Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*, Papilionidae)

The Giant Swallowtail is the largest butterfly species in the United States, having a wingspan between 4-6 inches. The butterfly's host plants include prickly ash, citrus species, and hop tree. The larva is known as "Orange Dog," because of the citrus host. The caterpillar has excellent camouflage as it mimics bird droppings to avoid predators. The caterpillar is not poisonous to humans, but it has a scent organ, an osmeterium, resembling two orange horns that the caterpillar will use to give off an odor to repel predators. The wings of the Giant Swallowtail butterfly are black with a horizontal yellow line across the forewings, and a diagonal yellow line across the hindwing. The underside of the wings are yellow with accents of black. Two small red and black eyespots mark the inner edge of each hindwing.



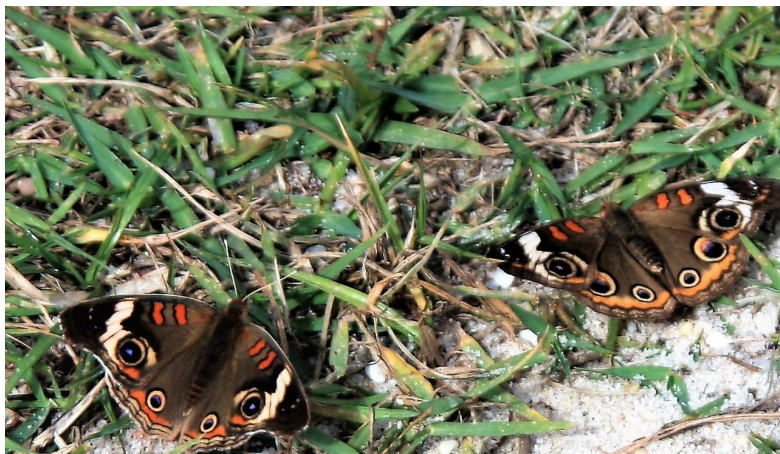
Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*, Nymphalidae)

The Gulf Fritillary is the only member of genus *Agraulis*. It is called the “Passion Butterfly” because the *Passiflora* plants are host plants for the larvae. The Gulf Fritillary is a bright orange butterfly. Females are larger in size than males, and usually darker in color. The top surface of the wings is deep orange in color. Black streaks run across the top layers. The underside of the wings is brown with speckled with silvery white dots. The range of the Gulf fritillary is in the southern areas of the United States into parts of Mexico, Central America, South America, and the West Indies. The female Gulf Fritillary lays her eggs on the tendrils or leaves of the passion vine. The mature larva is bright orange with numerous black branched spines that do not sting, but are noxious if eaten because of chemicals found in the passion vine. The warning colors in the adult butterfly alert predators to stay away.



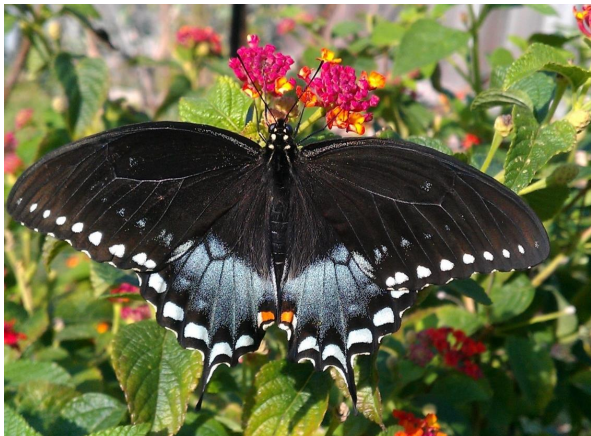
Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*, Nymphalidae)

The Buckeye is common across North America from Canada to Mexico and are especially common in Florida. In late summer through fall, large numbers of adults migrate southward into the Florida peninsula, where the adults overwinter. They prefer open sunny habitats from fields, gardens, roadsides and shorelines. The most common larval food plants are plantains and snapdragons. The caterpillars are colored black with orange spots, and non-stinging blue-black spines. The adult butterfly is brown in color with large black eyespots ringed with orange, black and white. They have a pair of orange bars on the leading edge of the forewing. The underside is a gray-brown with orange bars but no eyespots. It has a wingspan of 2-2 1/2 inches. Males are territorial, and will patrol areas and fly out at anything that passes.



Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*, Papilionadae)

The Spicebush Swallowtail is found in North America. Its larval host plants are spicebush, sassafras, camphor and other laurels. Their larval stages are unique because as larvae Spicebush Swallowtails have two stages of mimicry. In their early stages, the larvae are dark brown and resemble bird droppings, which steers predators away. When the larvae have reached their last instar and are nearly ready to pupate they turn a yellow-green color and have two large black dots with a white highlight, which makes them resemble a snake. The caterpillars also have “snake tongue” or an osmeterium that is a Y-shaped red organ that it will unfold if threatened. Mimicking snakes help the caterpillars scare off predators, specifically birds. The butterfly is black-brown in color. The hindwings on the females are bluer in appearance than the male’s hindwings that are green-blue. The forewing has a border of cream-colored, oval spots. The underside of the hindwing has 2 rows of orange spot bands. In between these rows, there is more blue or green coloring. The Spicebush Swallowtail is found in sunny gardens, forest edges, and in wooded areas, flying closer to the ground.



Sulphur Butterflies (Family Pieridae)

The Sulphur, or yellow, butterflies range in size from the Dainty Sulphur with a one inch wingspan to the largest and most common Cloudless Sulphur with a 2 ½ inch wingspan. Sulphur butterflies can be very light lemon yellow, greenish white, to orange yellow in color. Some species have black margins or spots, while other species may even have pink spots. Some of the common yellows that may visit a garden include the Cloudless Sulphur, and less common sulphurs like the Clouded Sulphur, Little Yellow, Orange Sulphur, Dainty Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, Southern Dogface and the Orange Barred Sulphur. The most common larval food plants are Senna and Partridge pea. The Sulphur butterflies are abundant in gardens, fields, and open areas. Some of the Sulphur butterflies like the Cloudless Sulphur will migrate in the fall to the south Florida for the winter.



White Butterflies (*Pieris sp.*, Family Pieridae)

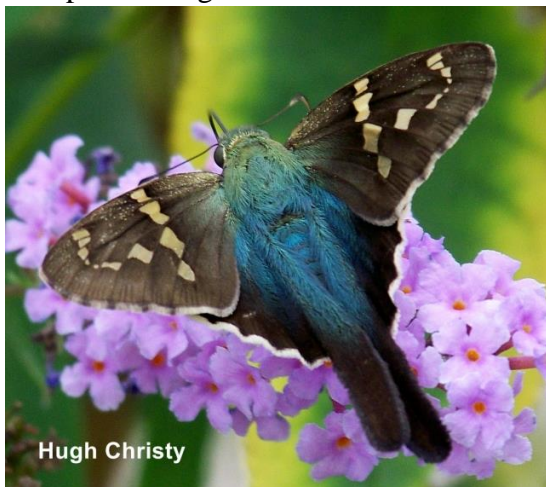
White butterflies are often found in flower gardens and can be considered pests because their larval food plants include cabbage, mustard greens, radish leaves, and Nasturtium. The Cabbage White is one of our most common butterflies. They are mainly white with a black patch at the wingtip and have turquoise antennal clubs. The females have two spots and range from slightly off-white to almost pure charcoal. Males have one spot in the middle of the forewing. The Great Southern White is more common along the Gulf Coast, and the coastal areas of Florida, Georgia, and Texas. The males are a brighter white than females. Females lay in clusters on almost any plant in the mustard family as well as Cleome.



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Skippers (Family Hesperidae)

Skippers are family Hesperidae with more than 3,500 species of skippers classified worldwide. Named after their jerky, skipping flight, Skippers have similar characteristics as moths and are the least developed of the butterflies. Skippers and moths have a stockier body than most butterflies, shorter wings, a large head with large compound eyes, and backwards hooked antennae clubs. When the larvae pupates, it will make a cocoon like structure and forms a chrysalis inside the cocoon. There are many varieties of Skippers in Louisiana, including the Common Checkered Skipper, which rapidly dart between flowers and the larval food plant are mallows. The Ocola Skipper, Fiery Skipper, Long-tailed Skipper, Silver-spotted Skipper, larval host plants are grasses.



Hugh Christy

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Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*, Nymphalidae)

The Pearl Crescent butterfly gets its name from the small white crescent moon that is enclosed in a brown patch at center of the margin on the hindwing. They are small butterflies with a wingspan of 1-1 3/8 inches. The wings are orange with black borders and black markings. They're found throughout much of the United States, southern Canada and Mexico. They fly lower to the ground and frequent open areas such as pastures, meadows, road edges, vacant lots, fields, streams, open pinewoods. The caterpillar feeds on asters and is brown with yellow rings and spines that do not sting.

