

# Look!

## Some Butterflies of Los Altos Hills

Which ones have YOU seen?



John Metcalfe for  
California Naturalist  
Class 2021  
Grass Roots Ecology

### Did you know?

Our most common urban butterfly. Resting position makes it easy to spot. Male-chasing - male games are fast, fun often spiraling high as they smell each other like dogs do



### Fiery Skipper

1. **Size:** Small 1½" - 1¾"
2. **Flight:** April to December, most common in late summer
3. **Marks:** Orange with brown streaks and borders and dusky spots on underside. Fast flyer. Sits with forewings up and hindwings flattened. Short antennae. Large black eyes
4. **Visits:** Caterpillars eat grasses. Adults visit many flowers
5. **Habitat:** Grassy areas, golf courses and lawns

### Did you know?

Patrols its area. Sits on a lookout twig watching for intruders and mates

Overwinters as an adult and will fly around on sunny days with little wind in January to April



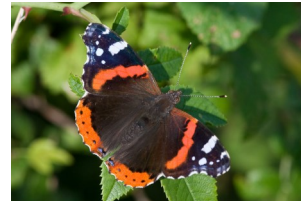
### Mourning Cloak

1. **Size:** Large 2¼" - 3½"
2. **Flight:** March to September laying eggs. New adults emerge mid-summer and live through winter. Glides and flaps. Quite fast
3. **Marks:** Dark brown with wide yellow or white border and small blue edge dots. Underside is dark
4. **Visits:** Buckeye, willow, catkins
5. **Habitat:** Woodlands with water/damp and sunny patches

### Did you know?

Overwinters as adult butterfly, sometimes in your house or shed!

Caterpillars will make a nest of silk and lives together on nettles



### Red Admiral

1. **Size:** Large 2" - 2½"
2. **Flight:** All year on sunny days. Fast flight stopping for flowers or to sun itself
3. **Marks:** Orange and black with orange bands on forewing and hindwing. Unlike ladies, no round spots on underwing
4. **Visits:** Nettles, buckeye, thistles, willows, damaged fruit
5. **Habitat:** Where thistles grow. Moist meadows, urban too

### Did you know?

Overwinters as adults in very large colonies on California coast. In Spring, multiple generations migrate north  
Sometimes mistaken for gulf fritillary, painted lady or red admiral

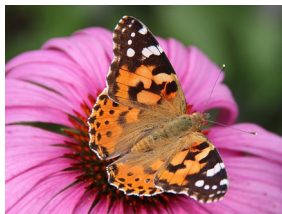


### Monarch

1. **Size:** Very Large 4½" - 4¾"
2. **Flight:** August to November then on sunny days November to April where hibernating
3. **Marks:** Orange with a black border, containing white spots. Black veins and black body
4. **Visits:** Caterpillars eat milkweed, adult nectars on flowers
5. **Habitat:** Roadsides, canyons, gardens, open spaces

### Did you know?

Migrates strongly north in late March to April often in large numbers. Indicating which way north lies! Thousands can appear some years  
Overwinters as adult butterfly



### Painted Lady

1. **Size:** Large 2" - 2¾"
2. **Flight:** All Year
3. **Marks:** Black and orange with white block on front wing, black dots on rear and circles on underside
4. **Visits:** Thistles, mule ears, plantain, many flowers
5. **Habitat:** Almost anywhere

### Did you know?

Invasive butterfly originally from Europe. Our only naturalized exotic butterfly. Causes crop damage  
Caterpillar eats cabbage, mustard, nasturtium



### Cabbage White

1. **Size:** Medium 1¾" - 2¼"
2. **Flight:** March to October. Common and widespread
3. **Marks:** White with black tips. Female has two black spots, males have one
4. **Visits:** Cabbage, mustard, nasturtium
5. **Habitat:** Most places, often urban settings

Scan or <https://sites.google.com/view/look-butterflies/home>

- Photograph credits, Latin names
- Resources for interested people
- The butterfly life cycle

Reprints: Los Altos Hills Town Hall or  
use QR code to find download site

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### Did you know?

Often the first blue butterfly of early springtime. Males fly around bushes looking for females. Both butterflies often spend time in the tree tops  
Similar to other small blues, but spring azure has no red dots

### Spring Azure or Echo Blue

1. **Size:** Very small 1" - 1½"
2. **Flight:** February to July. Flutters 10 feet from the ground over bushes looking wind blown but it's heading where it wants to go
3. **Marks:** Pale blue with black (top) and white (bottom) border. Underside blue with a line of spots
4. **Visits:** Puddles and mud. Caterpillars eat flowers like buckeye
5. **Habitat:** Open spaces, paths near woodland. Rests wings closed



### Did you know?

Birds think the tail is the head saving the butterfly but sometimes it loses its tails  
They are attracted to the Plaza in Market Street for its flowering cherry trees, planes trees, a water fountain, and dappled sun

### Western Tiger Swallowtail

1. **Size:** Very large 3½" - 4½"
2. **Flight:** March - September mainly June/July
3. **Marks:** Black stripes on yellow with blue edge, tails and small red eye spots. Glides and flaps. Likes treetops
4. **Visits:** Buckeye, and many garden flowers and puddles
5. **Habitat:** Woodlands with streams and willows



### Did you know?

Caterpillars look just like bird poop. Who would eat that! Males patrol their patches on trails moving from perch to perch about 10 feet up. Rests with wings open.  
Similar to California sister but has no black surrounding orange spot

### Lorquin's Admiral

1. **Size:** Large 2½" - 2¾"
2. **Flight:** April to September. Glides among trees
3. **Marks:** Black with a bold band of white rectangles on forewings and orange wingtips
4. **Visits:** Buckeye flowers, yerba santa, thistle
5. **Habitat:** Openings and edges of moist forests. Streams and wet areas with willows and sunny spots

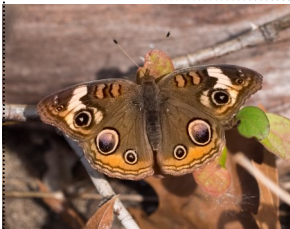


### Did you know?

Flight - flap, flap, glide . Will eat roadkill—argh!  
Very similar to Lorquin's admiral but has black surrounding orange spot on forewings

### California Sister

1. **Size:** Large 2¾" - 3½"
2. **Flight:** April to October. Swift and high gliding down now and then. Males perch watching for females
3. **Marks:** Dark brown with white stripe, large orange spot
4. **Visits:** Oaks, Buckeye, Coyote bush and old fruit
5. **Habitat:** Oak woodlands, canyons. Puddles on damp sand

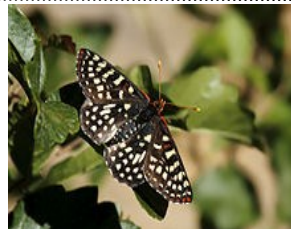


### Did you know?

The eye spots scare away birds. Can feel like it's following or leading you on sunny trails by landing and taking off near you  
**Host:** Plantains, clover, monkey flower, bee plants. Rest with wings open

### Common Buckeye

1. **Size:** Medium 1½" - 2¼"
2. **Flight:** March to November .Fast flyer, sits on ground often, patrols for mates on trails
3. **Marks:** Brown with six eye spots and four red rectangles on forewing
4. **Visits:** Coyote bush, clovers, buckeyes
5. **Habitat:** Open fields, trails and pathways. Not in deep forests

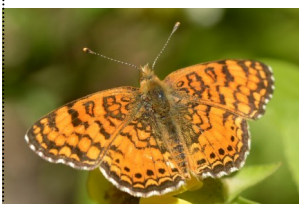


### Did you know?

During a drought caterpillars can hibernate for several years  
Caterpillars eat bee plants, penstemon, monkey flower, plantain  
Similar to other checkerspot, perhaps mylitta crescent

### Variable or Chalcidon Checkerspot

1. **Size:** Medium 1¾" - 2¼"
2. **Flight:** March/April to June/July
3. **Marks:** Black with small yellow spots and red spots on hind wing, Red/yellow antenna, White dots on body.
4. **Visits:** An avid visitor to many flowers
5. **Habitat:** Meadows, chaparral



### Did you know?

Butterflies can see movement but must be very close to another insect to see and smell if it's another mylitta—like dogs do

### Mylitta Crescent

1. **Size:** Small 1½" - 1¾"
2. **Flight:** March to September
3. **Marks:** Orange with black border, a row of black dots and squiggles. Orange tipped antennae
4. **Visits:** Thistles
5. **Habitat:** Wet meadows with thistles, woodland openings near water. Patrols streams and trails



### Did you know?

It's colors get lighter towards winter matching dry grassland  
It zig zags just above grass in a random looking pattern to avoid predators but always knows where it's going. It never seems to stop flying and settle

### California or Common Ringlet

1. **Size:** Small 1" - 1½"
2. **Flight:** March to September above grass
3. **Marks:** Looks a bit like a moth. Light brown/orange with small black rings and a ziggle on underside
4. **Visits:** grasses, meadow flowers
5. **Habitat:** Grassland, oak woodland with grass