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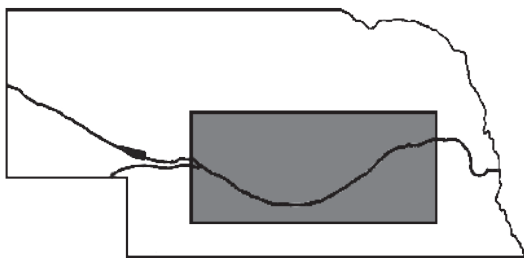


Purplish Copper, J. Nikkila

This field guide is the result of 40 years of butterfly research and observations at the Platte River prairies of the National Audubon Society's Rowe Sanctuary, The Nature Conservancy and The Crane Trust, as well as personal observations in the geographic range of this booklet. It is hoped that this field guide will illustrate the great diversity of the Platte River Valley.

The identification photos come from specimens in the collection of Jim Reiser and the author, Neil Dankert. All butterfly specimen photos are life size to aid with identification. They are grouped by similar species in order to make quick comparisons. The species range from quite common to occasional summer strays from other regions.

The guide focuses on the Central Platte River Valley. More specifically, the geographic range of the guide stretches from North Platte, Nebraska on the west to Columbus, Nebraska in the east.



Glossary

Brood - A single generation of butterflies

Common - Seen regularly in the region

Dorsal - Top view

Forewing - Top wing

Hindwing - Bottom wing

Margin - Outer portion of the wing

Migrant - May be a common to occasional visitor to the region as part of its regular annual dispersion

Morph - A color variation of a species

Occasional - Present but seen infrequently

Rare - Unusual to be seen in the region

Riparian - Areas adjacent to rivers and streams

Seep - Moist area where groundwater collects

Stray - Present away from its normal range

Uncommon - Unlikely but not unusual

Understory - Vegetation beneath a tree canopy

Ventral - Bottom view

Woodland Margin - Edge of a woodland



Help survey Nebraska butterflies

The presence of butterfly species in the state can vary widely each year, and because of the limited range of many species they can be hard to track.

Help conduct the annual census of Nebraska butterflies so that scientists can more accurately track the diversity and spread of butterflies. Send sightings to NebraskaButterflies@gmail.com. Include location, species, approximate numbers, a brief description and a photo if one is available.

At the end of each year, all who submit at least one sighting will receive an annual report via email detailing butterfly species seen in Nebraska that year.

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Monarch, Chris Helzer



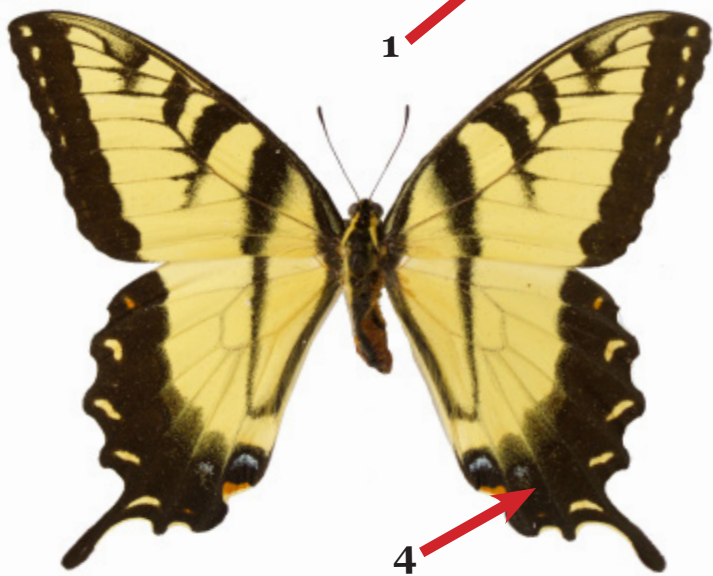
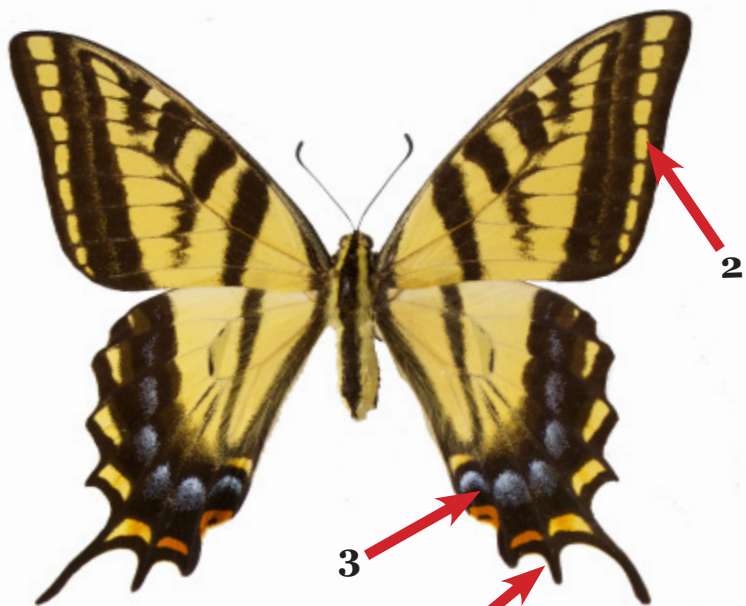
**** All butterfly specimen photos in this guide are life size to aid with identifications.***

Giant Swallowtail

Papilio cresphontes

Free ranging, May to Sept, occasional

Wide ranging but often associated with prickly ash



Two-tailed Swallowtail (female)

Papilio multicaudata

Has been found as far east as Buffalo County,
May to Sept, uncommon

Two tails on hindwing¹, yellow spots on
forewing margins rectangular,² yellow
color may be slightly darker than that of
the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (below)

Specimen pictured is a female; males lack the
significant amount of blue mixed with the black
on the hindwing.³

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (male)

Papilio glaucus

General distribution, May to Sept, common

Similar to Two-tailed Swallowtail (above)

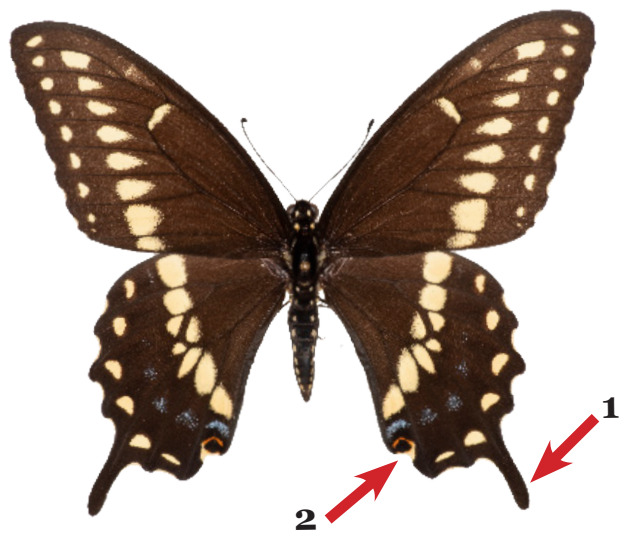
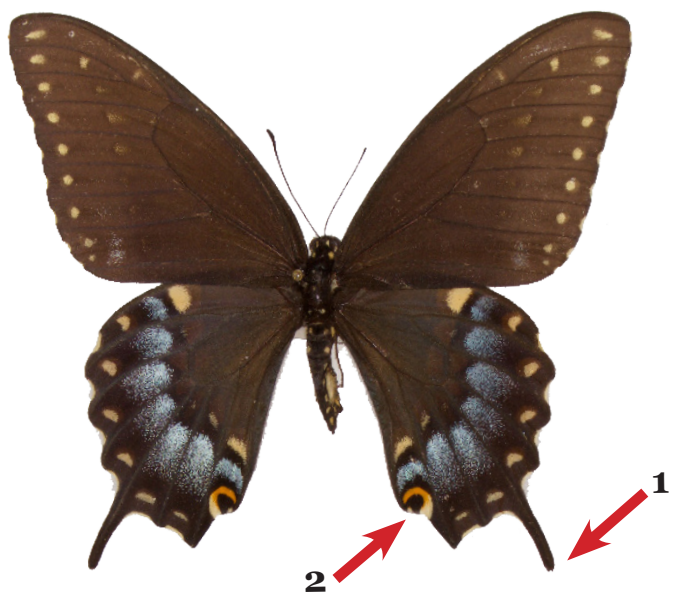
Specimen pictured is a male; females have a
significant amount of blue mixed with the black
on the hindwing⁴

Dark forms of females (page 18) occasionally
occur, resembling Black Swallowtails (page 16)
or Red-spotted Purples (page 18), but this is
more common in southern portions of their
range and is uncommon in Nebraska





Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, J. Nikkila



Black Swallowtail (female)

Papilio polyxenes

Widely distributed, May to Sept, common

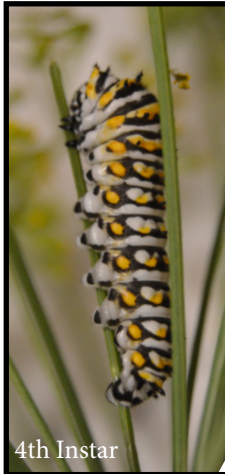
Hindwing with a tail¹ and eyespot², profile slightly more elongated than the Red-spotted Purple (next page)

Black Swallowtail (male)

Papilio polyxenes



3rd Instar



4th Instar



5th Instar

*Instars not shown to scale



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (Dark morph female)
Papilio glaucus

General distribution, May to Sept, dark morph is rare in the Central Platte River Valley

Red-spotted Purple
Limenitis arthemis astyanax

Mostly woodland margins, mainly June to early July although there are also sightings in late August/early September, uncommon





Banded Hairstreak, J. Nikkila



Black Swallowtail (ventral)

Papilio polyxenes

Widely distributed, May to Sept, common

Hindwing with a tail and eyespot, profile slightly more elongated than the Red-spotted Purple (below)

Red-spotted Purple (ventral)

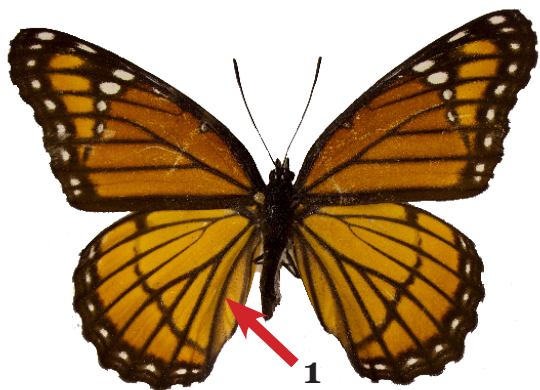
Limenitis arthemis astyanax

Mostly woodland margins, mainly June to early July although there are also sightings in late August/early September, uncommon

Est. Tiger Swallowtail (Dark morph female ventral)

Papilio glaucus

General distribution, May to Sept, dark morph is rare in the Central Platte River Valley



Viceroy

Limenitis archippus

Riparian areas - often in association with willows, June to Sept, can be locally common

Similar to Monarch (below) but somewhat smaller with a black band across the hindwing¹

Monarch (male)

Danaus plexippus

Generally distributed, migrations peak in May and Sept, uncommon to abundant

Males have spot on hindwing²



Monarch, J. Nikkila



*Instars not shown to scale



Viceroy, J. Nikkila





Monarch, J. Nikkila



Queen

Danaus gilippus

Found from late May to frost, it is a southern species that occasionally strays into Nebraska

Monarchs and Viceroy's have black forewing veins which are lacking on the Queen, and also differing from Viceroy's in that there is no black band across the hindwing





Regal Fritillary

Speyeria idalia

Prairies/wetlands,
mid-June to mid-July,
females to early
September, rare but
can be locally common



Great Spangled Fritillary

Speyeria cybele

Prairies, wetlands and woodland margins,
mid-June to late July, uncommon to rare

Fore and hindwings both bright golden orange

Variegated Fritillary

Euptoieta claudia

Generally distributed, May to Sept, can be
common



Gray Hairstreak, Chris Helzer





Mourning Cloak

Nymphalis antiopa

Generally distributed, May to Sept, occasional

Uniformly dark with light yellow margin

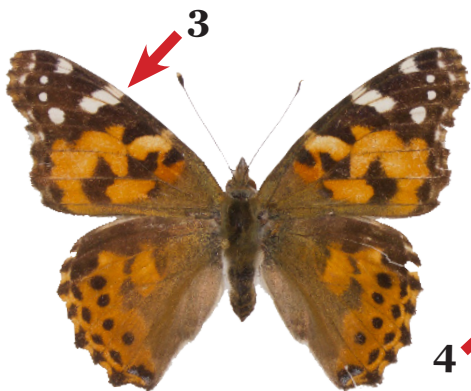
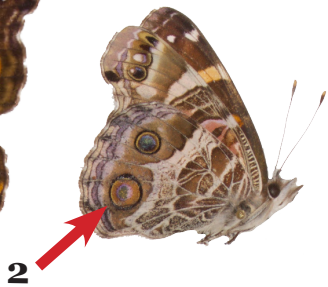
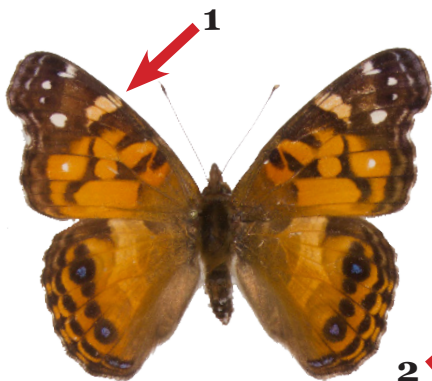
Goatweed Leafwing

Anaea andria

Generally distributed, May to Sept, occasional

Orange, hooked wingtip, dead leaf mimic when at rest





American Lady

Vanessa virginiensis

Generally distributed, May to Sept, uncommon

Similar to Painted Lady (below), but bar on forewing pink¹ and two eye spots on the ventral hindwing²

Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui

Generally distributed, May to Sept, occasional to abundant

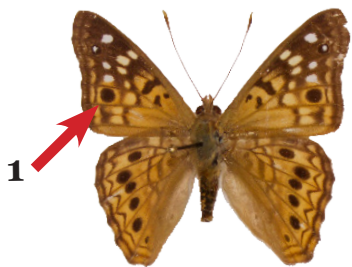
Similar to American Lady (above), but bar on forewing white³ and four smaller eye spots on the ventral hindwing⁴

Red Admiral

Vanessa atalanta

Generally distributed, May to Sept, occasional to abundant

Easily identified by the red bar on the forewing



Tawny Emperor (male, female)

Asterocampa clyton

Associated with Hackberry trees, June to frost, peaking in late June and late summer, widespread but uncommon

Similar to Hackberry Emperor (below), but Tawny Emperor has a slightly more golden hue

Hackberry Emperor

Asterocampa celtis

Woodland margins, May to Sept, uncommon to abundant

Similar to Tawny Emperor (above) but being more tan/brown and with a spot on the dorsal forewing margin¹

Buckeye

Junonia coenia

Open areas when not on flowers, May to Sept, can be common

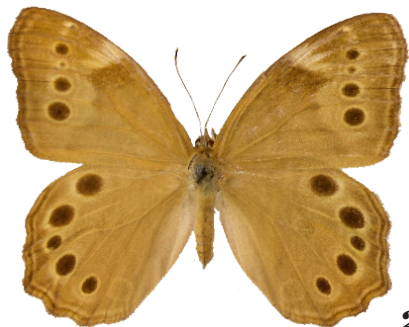




Buckeye, J. Nikkila



1



2



Common Wood Nymph

Cercyonis pegala

Grasslands, common late June to early July, worn-looking individuals into August

Darkest of the nymphs/satyrs

Eyed Brown

Lethe eurydice

Marshes and streamsides, late June to early July, occasional

Lighter in coloration than Common Wood Nymph (above), largely unicolored ventrally with smaller eye spots than Northern Pearly Eye (below)¹

Northern Pearly Eye

Lethe anthedon

Woodland understory/margins, June to July, rare

Adults often perch on tree trunks where they become difficult to find

Two-toned ventrally with larger eyespots than Eyed Brown (above)²

Little Wood Satyr

Megisto cymela

Open woodlands, woodland margins, mid-June to early July, occasional

Smaller size, light brown



Question Mark (dorsal, ventral)

Polygonia interrogationis

Generally distributed, May to Sept, occasional

Forewing with black “dash” absent in other *Polygonia* species¹

Silver mark on ventral hindwing curved with “broken” terminus forming a “?”



Eastern Comma (dorsal, ventral)

Polygonia comma

Generally distributed, May to Sept, uncommon

Silver mark on ventral hindwing curved and continuous forming a “,”



Gray Comma (dorsal, ventral)

Polygonia progne

Generally distributed, May to Sept, rare

Silver mark on ventral hindwing consisting of a straight line angled in the middle





American Snout, J. Nikkila





American Snout

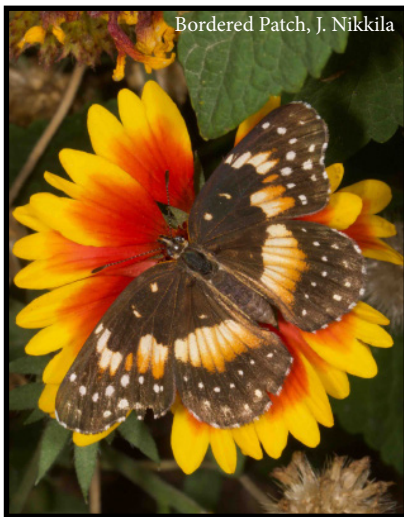
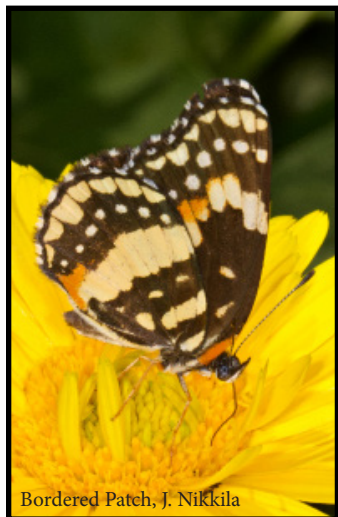
Libytheana carinenta

An occasional stray from the south, it is uncommon but can be found anywhere

Bordered Patch

Chlosyne lacinia

An occasional stray from the south, it can be absent one year and abundant the next, mostly late summer and fall







Pearl Crescent, J. Nikkila



1



2



3



3

Silver-bordered Fritillary

Boloria selene

Wet meadows and streamsides, May to Sept, locally common in appropriate habitat

Intermediate size, with bright silver markings ventrally

Silvery Checkerspot

Chlosyne nycteis

Woodland margins, often on mud, June to July, rare

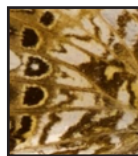
Ventral hindwings with band of larger ovals¹

Gorgone Checkerspot

Chlosyne gorgone

Prairies/roadsides, May to Sept, occasional to common

Ventral hindwings with several white arrowhead shaped markings²



Pearl Crescent (male, female)

Phyciodes tharos

General distribution May to Sept, common to abundant

Ventral hindwings indistinctly marked

Phaon Crescent (male, female, ventral)

Phyciodes phaon

Southern stray, mostly in riparian areas, can be common where found

Similar to Pearl Crescent, but Phaon Crescent dorsal markings show more contrast³

Sleepy Orange, J. Nikkila

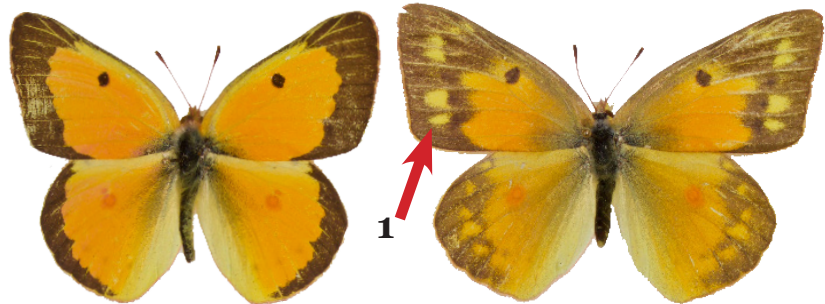


Dainty Sulphur, J. Nikkila





Alfalfa Butterfly/Orange Sulphur, J. Nikkila



Alfalfa Butterfly / Orange Sulphur (male, female)

Colias eurytheme

Widely distributed, May to Sept, abundant

Has an orange hue dorsally, black margin with yellow spots on females¹

Sleepy Orange (male, female)

Abaeis nicippe

Uncommon but regular migrant, peaks in May and early June

No other sulphur butterflies of similar size and markings

Clouded Sulphur (male, female)

Colias philodice

Widely distributed, May to Sept, common

Yellow dorsally with no orange hue, black margin with yellow spots on females, looks similar to Alfalfa Butterfly ventrally

Little Sulphur (dorsal, ventral)

Pyrisitia lisa

Uncommon stray, has been found mid-May to frost

No other sulphur butterflies of similar size and markings, there is also an albinic form (not pictured)

Dainty Sulphur

Nathalis iole

Prefers open areas, June to frost, numbers vary



Melissa Blue, J. Nikkila





Cloudless Sulphur (female)

Phoebis sennae

Widely distributed stray, May to Sept,
uncommon

Forewing yellow with no orange hue, female
has spots on forewing¹

Mexican Sulphur

Eurema mexicanum

Stray, may be found from May to July, rare

No other sulphur butterflies of similar size and
markings

Dogface

Zerene cesonia

May be found from early April to frost, rare

No other sulphur butterflies of similar size and
markings, gets its name for pattern on dorsal
forewing²



Cabbage Butterfly

Pieris rapae

Wide range of habitats, May to Sept, can be abundant

Nearly completely white with black markings

Checkered White (female, male)

Pontia protodice

Widely distributed, May to Sept, occasional

More heavily marked than Cabbage Butterfly (above), especially females

Olympia Marblewing

Euchloe olympia

Weedy/disturbed areas, May, uncommon

Ventral hindwing with green marbling

Alfalfa Butterfly / Orange Sulphur

(albinic female)

Colias eurytheme

Widespread, May to Sept, common

All albinic *eurytheme* are female and have white spots on the black forewing margins¹



Checkered White, J. Nikkila





Dione Copper / Gray Copper (male, female)

Lycaena dione

Weedy/waste areas near Dock (*Rumex* sp.) host plants, mid-June to early July, can be locally abundant

Bronze Copper (male, female)

Lycaena hyllus

Marshy areas, multiple broods, May to Sept, occasional

Purplish Copper (male, female, ventral)

Lycaena helloides

Found in wetlands and riparian areas, three broods, from mid-May to frost, rare

Coral Hairstreak

Satyrrium titus

Various habitats but often found feeding at nectar, mid-June to mid-July, rare

Acadian Hairstreak (dorsal, ventral)

Satyrrium acadica

Riparian areas, mid-June to mid-July, occasional

Banded Hairstreak (dorsal, ventral)

Satyrrium calanus

On or near oaks, mid-June to mid-July, can be locally common

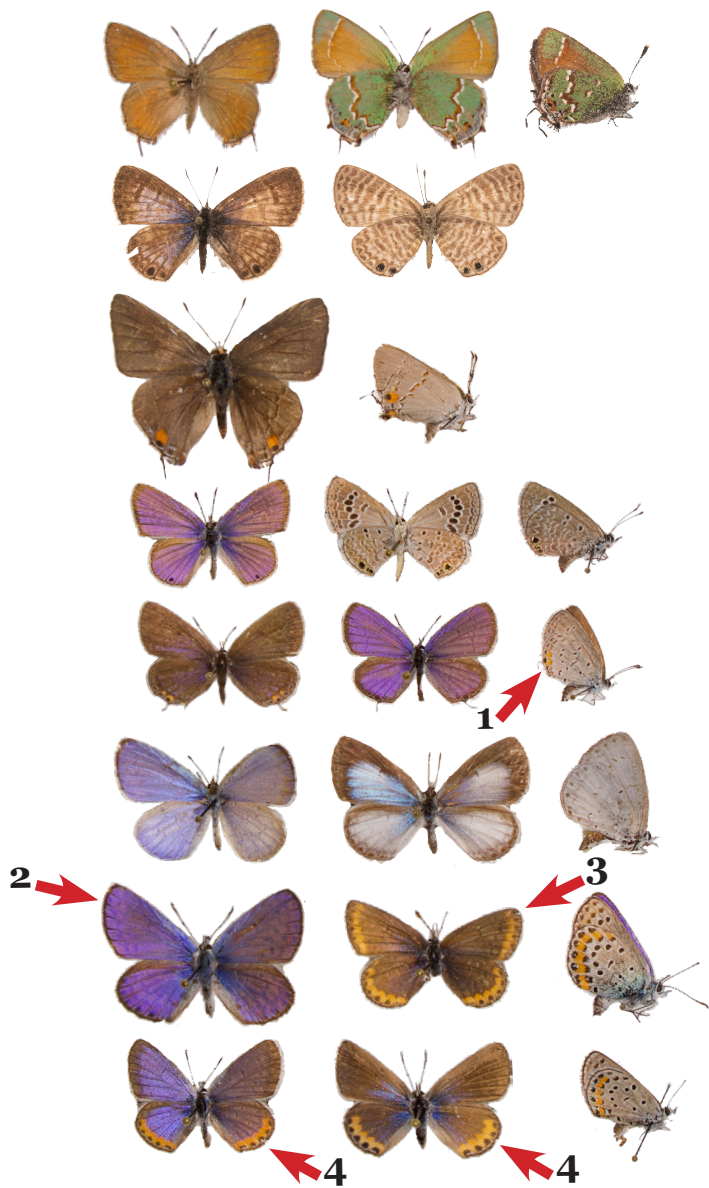
Ventral hindwing banding a series of white edged “dashes”





Eastern Tailed Blue, J. Nikkila





Juniper Hairstreak (dorsal, ventral)

Callophrys gryneus

On/near cedars, May and July, rare to occasional

Marine Blue (dorsal, ventral)

Leptotes marina

Stray, has been found from late May to frost, rare

Gray Hairstreak

Strymon melinus

Widespread, May to Sept, occasional to common

Reakirt's Blue (dorsal male, ventral)

Echinargus isola

Southern stray up until Sept, uncommon to absent

Eastern Tailed Blue (female, male)

Cupido comyntas

General distribution, May to Sept, can be abundant

Ventral hindwing with small tail adjacent to orange spot¹

Summer Azure (male, female)

Celastrina neglecta

Open wooded areas, often near dogwoods, June to July, uncommon

Melissa Blue (male, female)

Plebejus melissa

Prairie meadows and cultivated alfalfa, May to Sept, more common westward in range

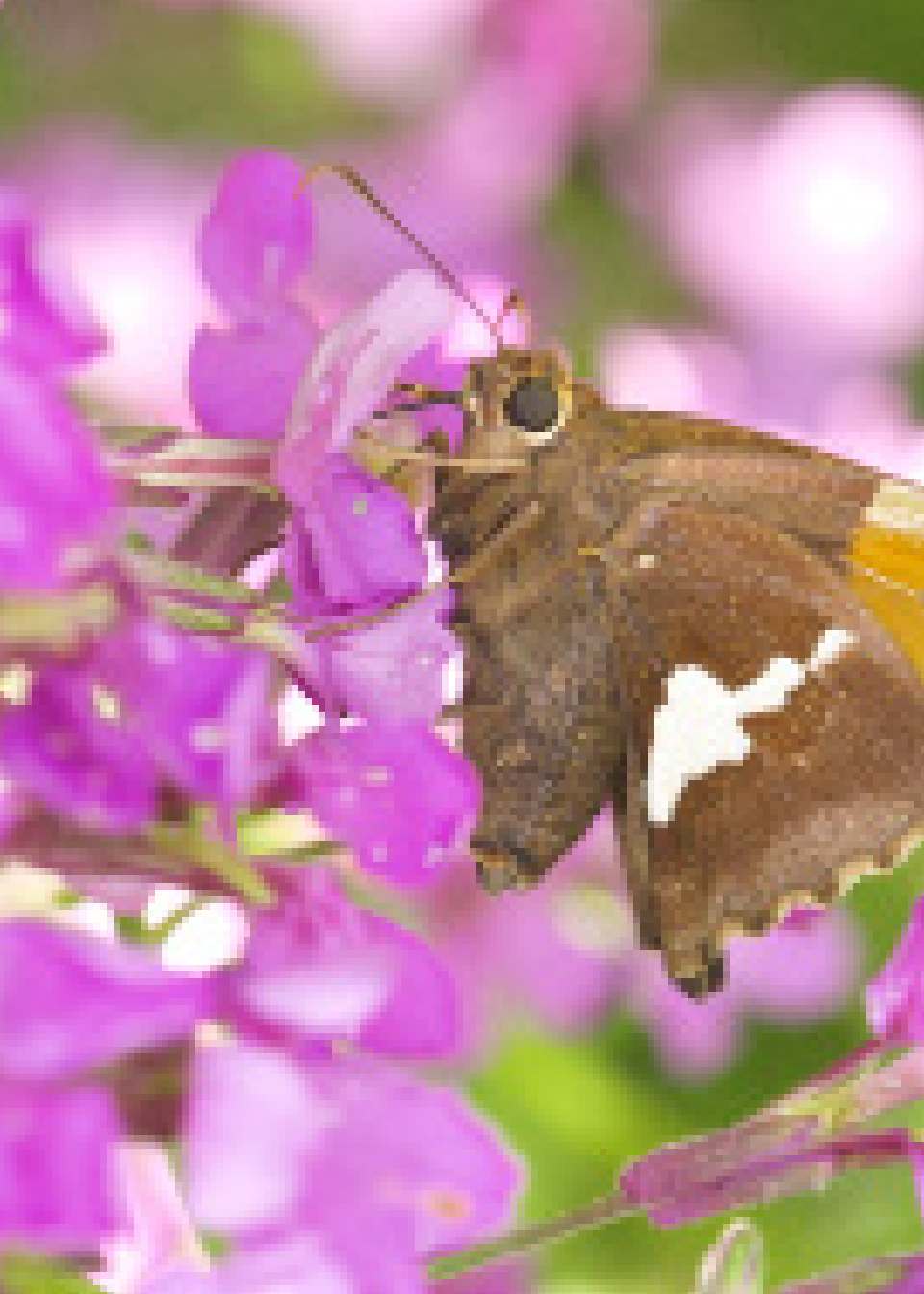
Dorsally males blue with no orange margin,² females darker with orange margins on both wings³

Lupine Blue (male, female)

Plebejus lupini

Open meadows, often on mud, May to Sept, rare

Dorsally both sexes have orange wing margins on hindwing only⁴





Silver-spotted Skipper, J. Nikkila



Silver-spotted Skipper

Epargyreus clarus

General distribution, May to Sept, can be common

Bold silver spot on ventral hindwing¹

Wild Indigo Duskywing

Erynnis baptisiae

Prairies and urban areas with Wild Indigo (*Baptisia* sp.) host plant, three flights from May to Sept, occasional but can be common

Most likely duskywing to be found in Platte River valley

Funereal Duskywing

Erynnis funeralis

Southern stray that can occur anywhere, Mid-summer to frost, rare

Only large skipper with a white fringe on the hindwing²



Hayhurst's Scallopwing

Staphylus hayhurstii

Disturbed areas, open woodlands and margins, mostly May to June but has been found into late August, uncommon

Common Sootywing

Pholisora catullus

Open areas, often roadways, can be abundant on mud

Most common mid-May to early June, additional broods to Sept

Common Checkered-Skipper (female, male)

Pyrgus communis

Open weedy areas, a stray found until frost, can be common



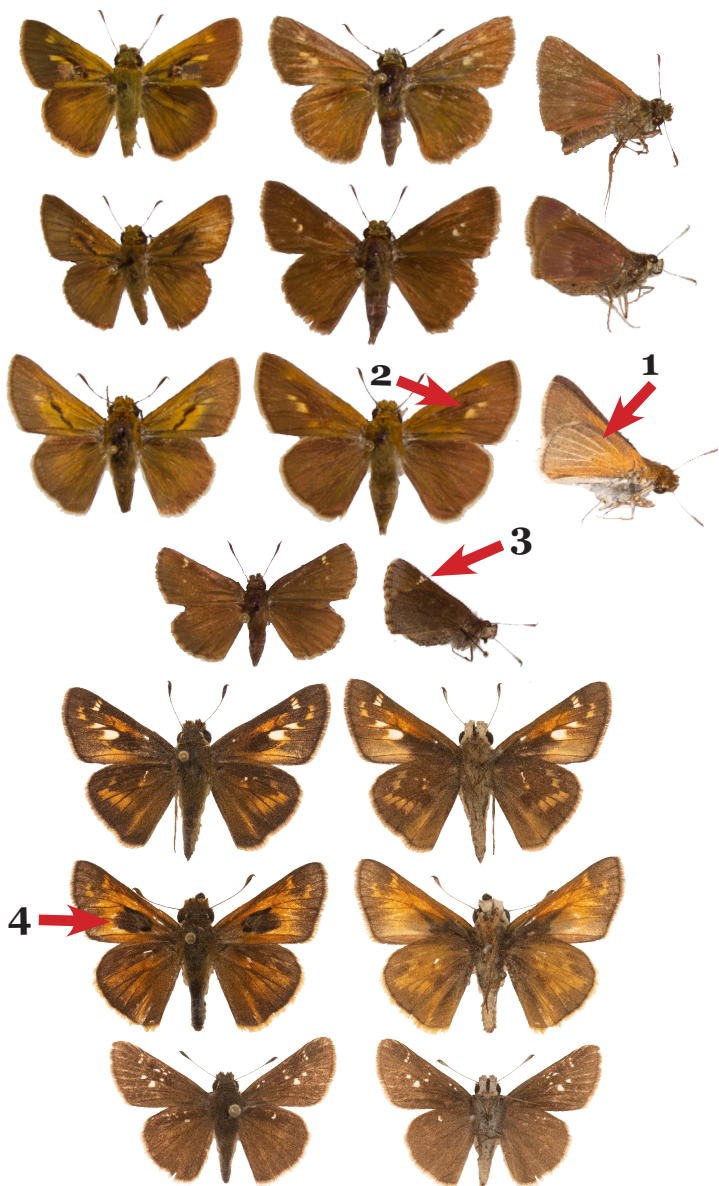
Common Checkered-Skipper, J. Nikkila



Common Checkered-Skipper, J. Nikkila



Common Sootywing, J. Nikkila



Northern Broken-Dash (male, female)

Wallengrenia egeremet

Lowland woodland margins, seeps, late June to July, rare

Nearly indecipherable from Dun Skipper (below) in the field

Dun Skipper (male, female)

Euphyes vestris

Habitats and flight period similar to Northern Broken-Dash (above) and the more abundant of the two, uncommon

Two-spotted Skipper (male, female)

Euphyes bimacula

Marshes, wet areas, late June to mid July, uncommon

Veins on the ventral hindwings are white,¹ female has two spots²

Common Roadside-Skipper

Amblyscirtes vialis

Open areas/roadsides, mainly May to early June, occasionally July

Small, black, with white spots near the tip of forewing³

Sachem (female dorsal, female ventral)

Atalopedes campestris

Southern stray occurring anywhere, arriving as early as May and staying until frost, often becomes abundant later in summer

Mottled ventral hindwing, male has large black stigma on dorsal forewing⁴

Sachem (male dorsal, male ventral)

Atalopedes campestris

Eufala Skipper (dorsal, ventral)

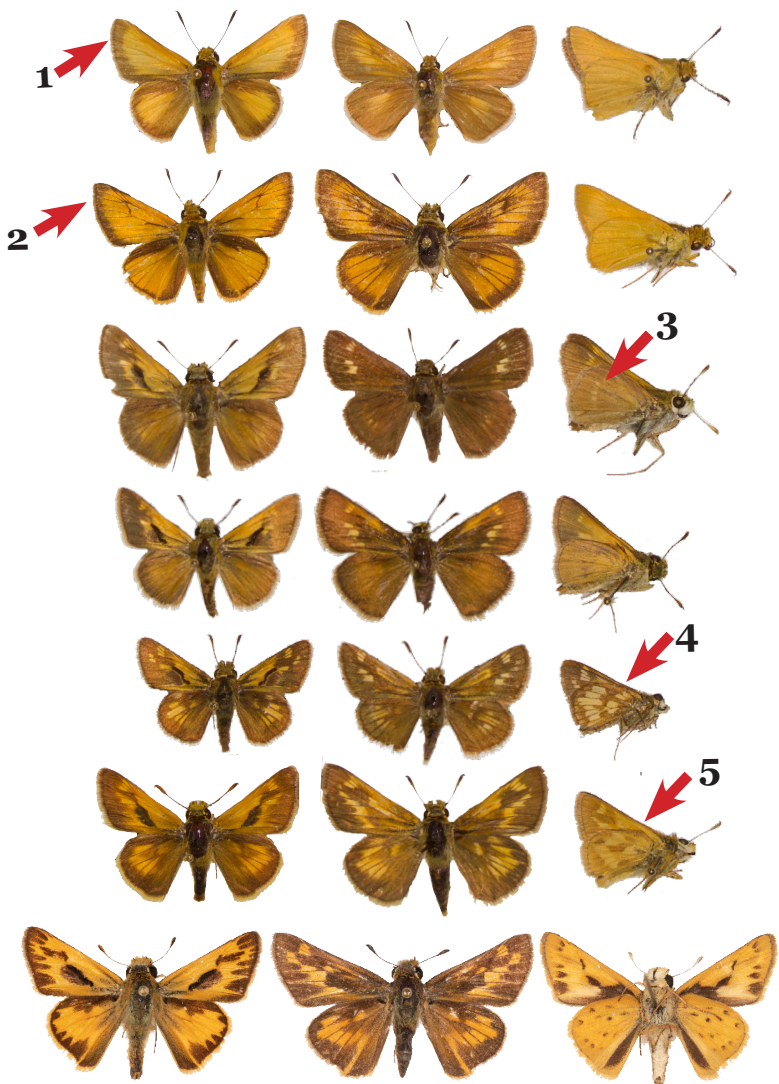
Lerodea eufala

Southern stray that can occur anywhere, usually not found before mid-August, generally uncommon

Fiery Skipper, J. Nikkila







Arogos Skipper (male, female)

Atrytone arogos

Upland prairies, May to August, rare

Dorsally wings with wide poorly defined brown margins¹

Delaware Skipper (male, female)

Anatrytone logan

Upland prairies, May to August, can be common

Dorsally wings with narrow black margins,² veins black

Crossline Skipper (male, female)

Polites origenes

Native prairies/wetlands, late June to July, uncommon

Ventral hindwing with poorly defined light spot³

Tawny-edged Skipper (male, female)

Polites themistocles

General distribution, May to Sept, can be common

Ventral hindwing with no markings, dirty brown

Peck's Skipper (male, female)

Polites peckius

More common near wetlands, May to Sept, can be abundant

Smaller with well-defined ventral hindwing markings⁴

Long Dash Skipper (male, female)

Polites mystic

Marshy riparian areas, late June to early July, uncommon

Ventral hindwing markings present but poorly defined⁵

Fiery Skipper (male, female, male ventral)

Hylephila phyleus

Southern stray that could occur anywhere, found late summer to frost, can become common

Bright coloration separates it from other skippers



Long Dash Skipper, J. Nikkila

Top right (clockwise), J. Nikkila: Roadside Skipper,
Dun Skipper, Hobomok Skipper, Sachem



Tawny-edged Skipper, J. Nikkila



Broad-winged Skipper (dorsal, ventral)

Poanes viator

Wetlands and marshes, one flight in July, can be common in isolated colonies

Similar to Hobomok and Zabulon skippers, but differentiated by flight period

Hobomok Skipper (female dorsal, female ventral)

Poanes hobomok

Found in prairies, riparian areas and parks, one flight mid-May to early June, uncommon

Well defined orangish patch on ventral hindwing¹

Hobomok Skipper (male dorsal, male ventral)

Poanes hobomok

Zabulon Skipper (female dorsal, female ventral)

Poanes zabulon

Open woodlands, two flights in late May to early June and late August to early Sept, rare

Strongly sexually dimorphic, male with broad expanses of gold, female dark with band of cream colored spots on forewings

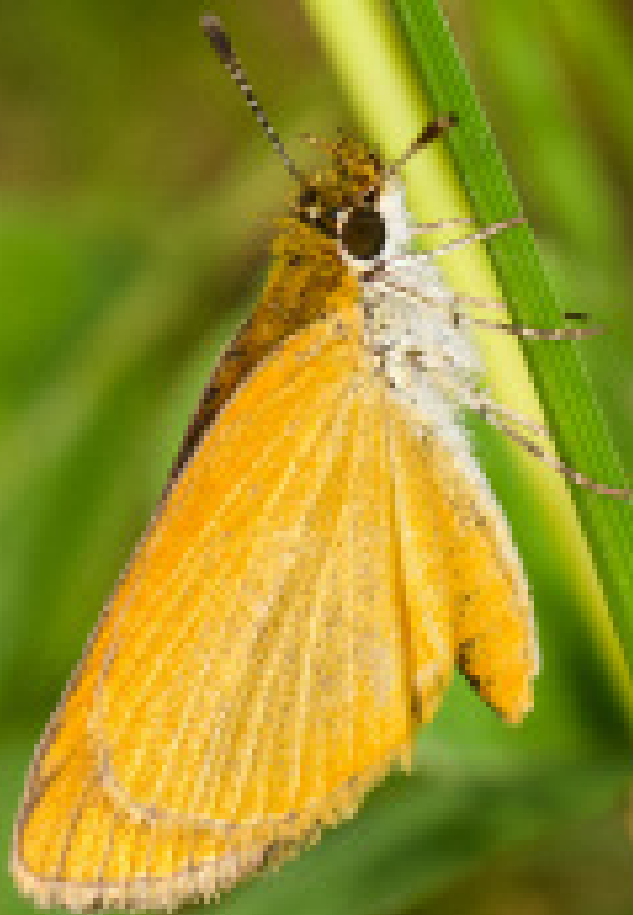
Zabulon Skipper (male dorsal, male ventral)

Poanes zabulon

Least Skipper

Ancyloxypha numitor

Adjacent to rivers and streams, June to Sept, occasional, often overlooked due to small size and habit of flying through vegetation



Least Skipper, J. Nikkila