

Butterfly Index

common name scientific name host plants

THE SWALLOWTAILS – FAMILY PAPILIONIDAE

Antise Swallowtail Papilio zelicaon carrot family
Western Tiger Papilio rutulus willows, sycamore
Pipevine Swallowtail Batus philenor dutchman's pipevine

THE WHITES – FAMILY PIERIDAE

Cabbage White Pieris rapae mustard family
Large Marble Euclyptus ausonides mustard family
Orange Sulphur Colias curythemis pea family

THE BLUES – FAMILY LYCAENIDAE

Silvery Blue Glaucopsyche lygdamus lupines
Acmon Blue Phegus acmon deerweed, lupines, vetches
Spring Azure or Echo Blue Castanea ladon buckwheats, lotus
Western Tailed Blue Evers amyntula oaks, california buckeye, ceanothus
Eastern Tailed Blue Evers comytas vetches
Western Pygmy Blue Brevithidium exile pea family
Green Hairstreak Calliphrys dumetorum pickleweed, california sea bite
Gray Hairstreak Synonym melchius coast buckwheat, deerweed
Mission Blue Mission Blue icartodes missionensis mallow and pea families

THE BRUSHFOOTS – FAMILY NYMPHALIDAE

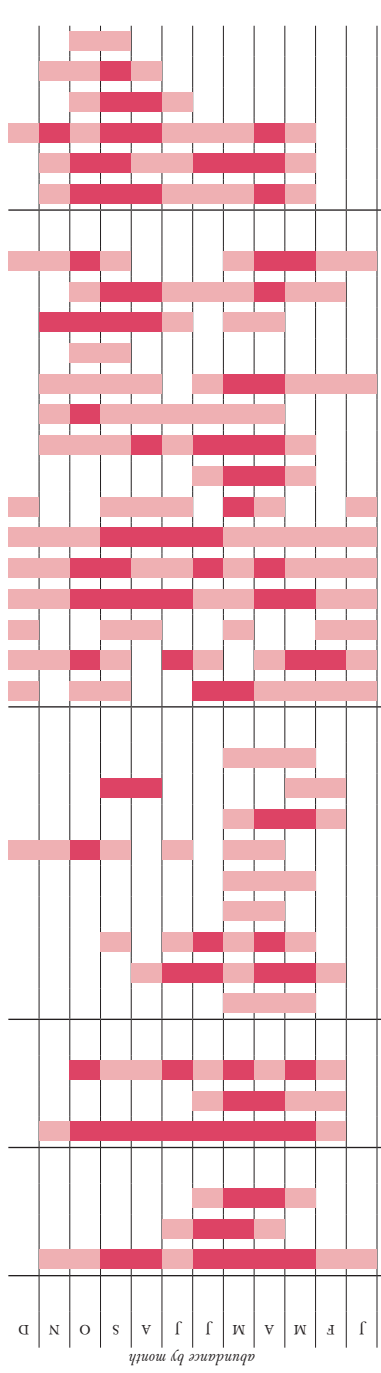
Mourning Cloak Nymphalis antopa willows
California Tortoiseshell Nymphalis californica ceanothus
Sally Angletwing Polygonia satyrus minis and nettles
Red Admiral Vanessa atalanta nettles, pellitory
West Coast Painted Lady Vanessa annabella mallow family
American Painted Lady Vanessa virginiensis peartly everlasting
Painted Lady Vanessa cardui thistles, mallow family
Variable Checkerspot Euphydryas chalcedona sticky monkey flower, paintbrush
Field Crescent Phycodes campestrus thistles
Mytila Crescent Mytila mytila thistles
Common Buckeye Junonia coenia plantains, bec plant
California Sister Adelpa bredowii oaks
Common Ringlet Coenonympha tullia passionvine
Monarch Danaus plexippus milkweeds

THE SKIPPERS – FAMILY HESPERIIDAE

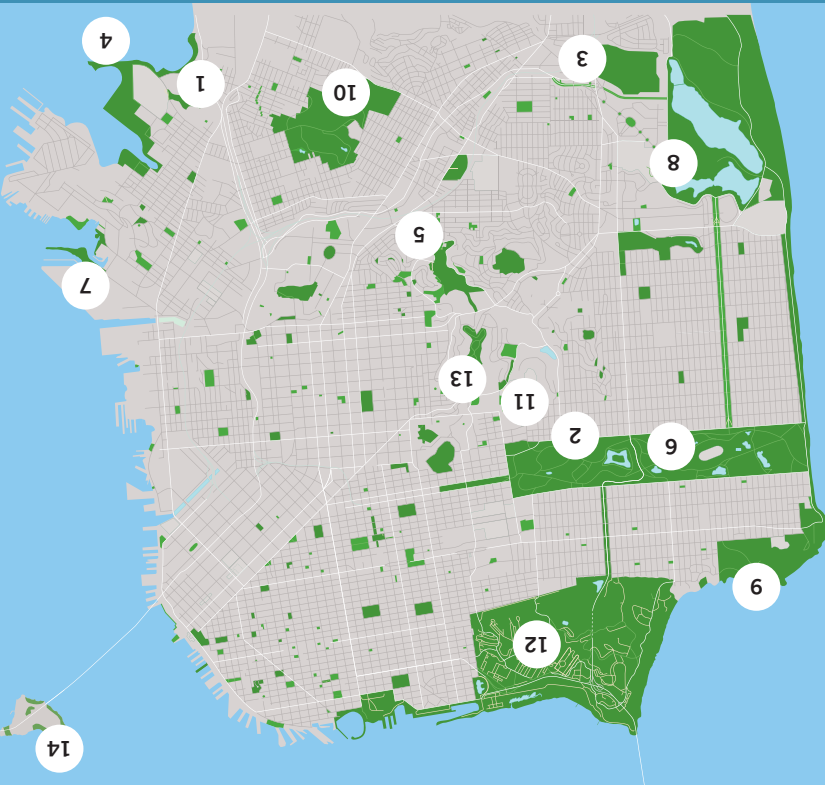
Fiery Skipper Hylephila phylus grasses
Umber Skipper Poanes melane bermuda grass
Common Checkered Skipper Pyrgus communis mallow family
Woodland Skipper Ochloides sylvanoides perennial grasses
Sandhill Skipper Polites sabuleti saltgrasses
Sachem Atalopedes campestris grasses, bermuda grass

* Overwinter as adults
F Federally listed endangered species
R Locally rare species
T Type Locality: The place on Earth where a species is first described by modern science.

Present in low numbers
Common / Abundant
Not Present



Great Places to See Butterflies in San Francisco



1. Bayview Hill
2. Botanical Gardens
3. Brotherhood Way
4. Candlestick Point
5. Glen Canyon
6. Golden Gate Park
7. Herons Head Park
8. Lake Merced
9. Lands End
10. McLaren Park
11. Mt. Sutro
12. Presidio
13. Twin Peaks
14. Yerba Buena Island

Butterflies of San Francisco

Illustrations & Inventory by
Liam O'Brien

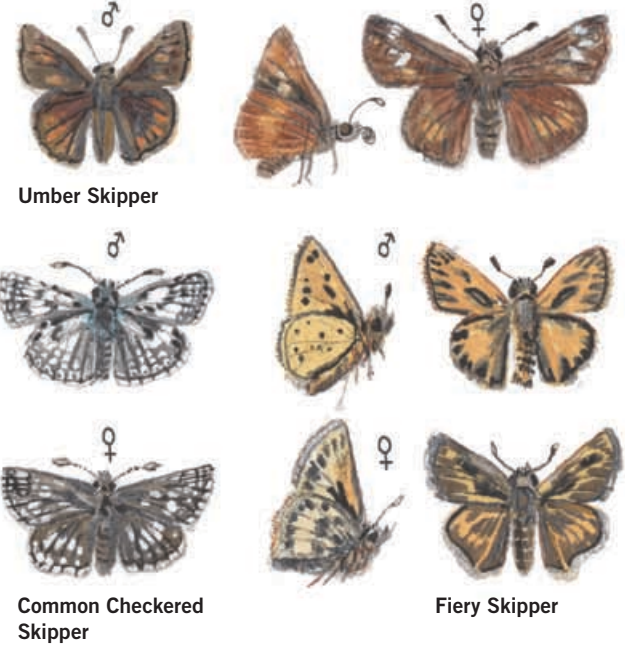


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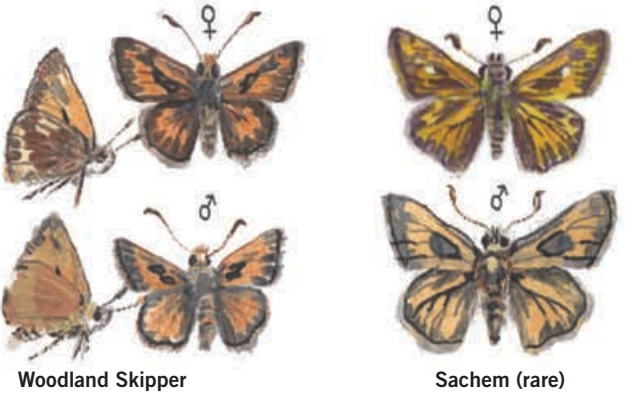
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the Skippers

Three most common (year-round):



Three less common (seasonal):



The Sandhill Skipper can be found at Crissy Field and the southeast shoreline of the Bay.

In 2007 I set out to explore every possible butterfly habitat in the city and county of San Francisco to see which butterfly species remained. Having looked at the city's historic butterfly record, I saw that we were losing species diversity at an alarming rate. During my first year of surveying I realized that the first step in turning this tide is to educate ourselves about this delicate fauna. You can start by using this guide to learn the names of the butterflies you see in your garden or local park. Once you start learning about San Francisco's butterflies you will undoubtedly want to learn more!

– Liam O'Brien

Nature in the City conserves and restores the Franciscan bioregion, its native plants, animals, and habitats, by connecting urban people with nature where they live. We hope you enjoy this very first Nature in the City brochure highlighting San Francisco's natural history.

Our city still harbors tremendous native biodiversity, but some of our butterflies' habitats are seriously endangered. We need your help to save our city's native wildlife, plants and the natural areas they inhabit. Contact the organizations below to help protect and restore nature in the city.

Nature in the City
P.O. Box 170088
San Francisco, CA 94117
415-564-4107
www.natureinthecity.org



All species drawn to actual size.

If not noted, sexes are the same.



the Brushfoots

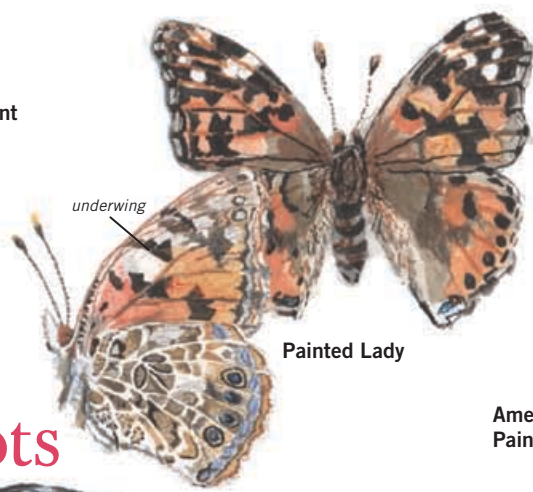
(family Nymphaliidae)



Field Crescent

Mylitta Crescent

California Sister



Painted Lady

American Painted Lady

Rarely sighted, the California Sister lives along Lobos Creek in the Presidio.



Common Buckeye



Monarch

Monarchs overwinter in San Francisco. Two great places to observe these butterflies are the community garden at Fort Mason and Rob Hill in the Presidio.



Satyr Angewing



Red Admiral



Gulf Fritillary



West Coast Painted Lady



California Tortoiseshell



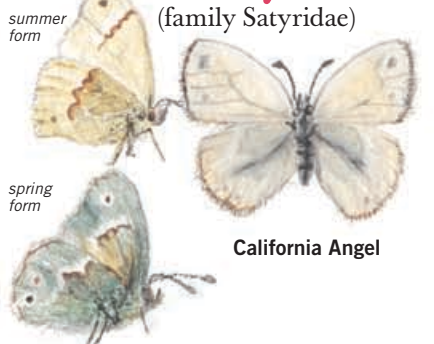
Mourning Cloak

Variable Checkerspot

The Variable Checkerspot—the most common native butterfly in California—was once widespread throughout the city. It is now limited to a single population behind Laguna Honda reservoir.

the Satyrs

(family Satyridae)



California Angel

the Swallowtails

(family Papilionidae)



Anise Swallowtail

The Anise Swallowtail is a strong hilltopper—a mate-locating behavior in which males congregate on exposed hilltops and search for females.

The best place to see this strong flyer is braving the powerful gusts of wind on Twin Peaks.



Pipevine Swallowtail

The Pipevine Swallowtail is generally only found at Yerba Buena Island and Lake Merced due to the rarity of its host plant, the Dutchman's Pipevine



Western Tiger Swallowtail

The Western Swallowtail is the largest butterfly in San Francisco. It uses willow riparian habitat and in San Francisco it has adapted to use the London Plane Tree. It can now be seen floating down Market Street.

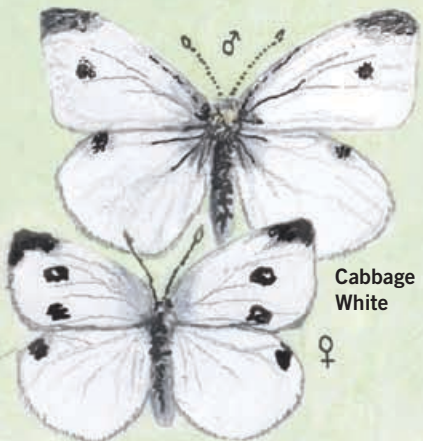
the Whites

(family Pieridae)



Large Marble

Based on butterfly surveys, Cabbage Whites are the most common butterflies in San Francisco.



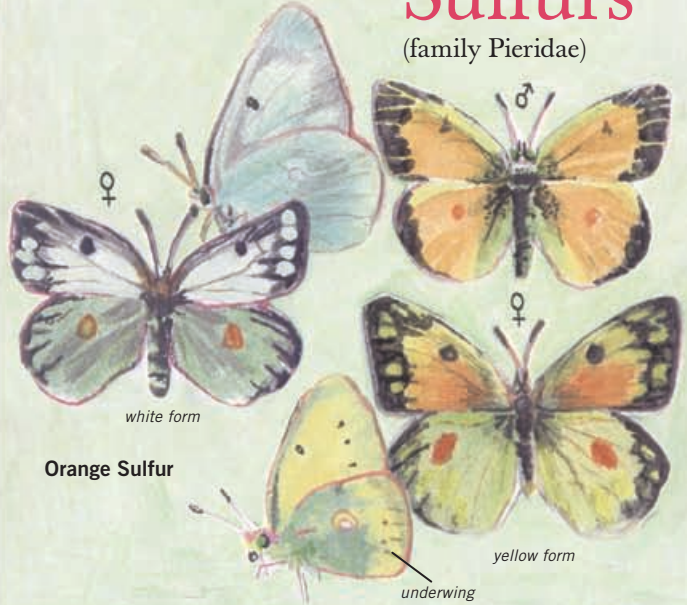
Cabbage White



underwing

the Sulfurs

(family Pieridae)



Orange Sulfur

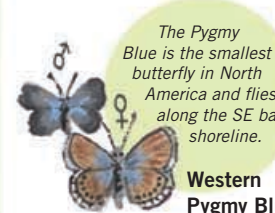
yellow form

underwing

white form

the Blues

(family Lycaenidae)

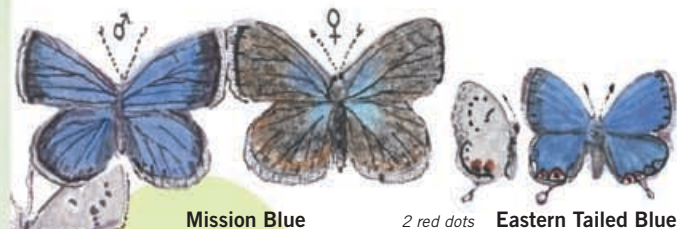


Western Pygmy Blue

The Pygmy Blue is the smallest butterfly in North America and flies along the SE bay shoreline.

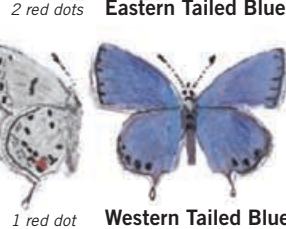


Silvery Blue

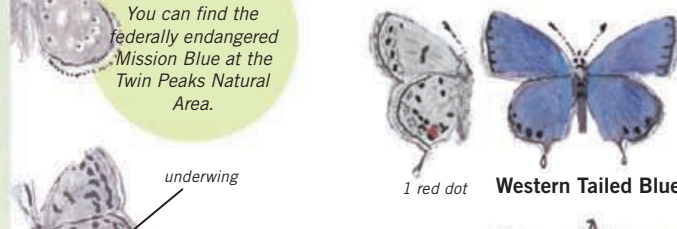


Mission Blue

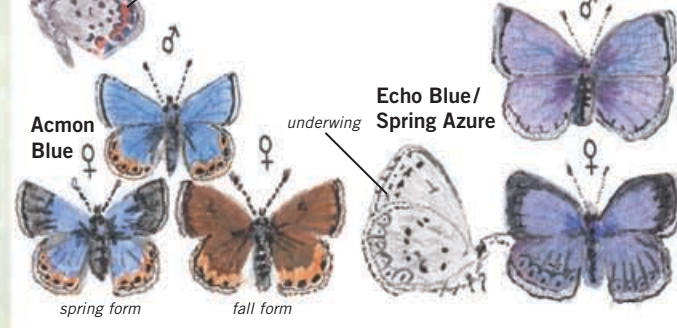
You can find the federally endangered Mission Blue at the Twin Peaks Natural Area.



Eastern Tailed Blue



Western Tailed Blue



Acmon Blue

Echo Blue/Spring Azure

the Hairstreaks

(family Lycaenidae)



Gray Hairstreak

Green Hairstreak

See the Green Hairstreak at one of its last remaining habitats in the Presidio or in the Outer Sunset on Hawk Hill.