

CHEAT SHEET FOR BUTTERFLY FAMILIES

SKIPPERS

FAMILY: Hesperidae
WINGSPAN: 2.2-5 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

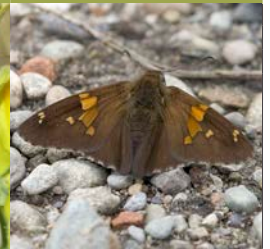
- ▶ Small to medium sized butterflies
- ▶ Bodies are compact and broad
- ▶ Antennae are often short, with hooked bulb at the end
- ▶ Fairly small, usually brown or orange
- ▶ Fly in speedy, skipping, stop-and-go manner
- ▶ Often hold their wings separated partially making two V's ("fighter jet" position)



Figure 1



Figure 2



GOSSAMER WINGS

FAMILY: Lycaenidae
WINGSPAN: 1.9-3.8 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Small to medium sized butterflies
- ▶ Many of the smallest and brightest butterflies
- ▶ Often brightly colored (can shimmer in sunshine) in blues, greens, or coppers
- ▶ May be dotted with bold spots
- ▶ Glittering, silky wings



Figure 3

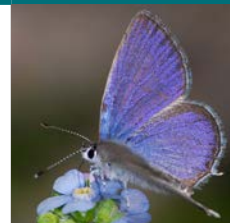


Figure 4



BRUSHFOOTS

FAMILY: Nymphalidae
WINGSPAN: 2.5-12.4 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Medium to large sized butterflies
- ▶ Various shades of orange, red, brown, and black are common among brushfoot butterflies
- ▶ The front pair of legs (fore legs) is reduced to tiny, brush like appendages held tightly beneath the thorax, so they appear to have only four legs



Figure 5

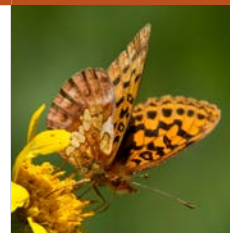
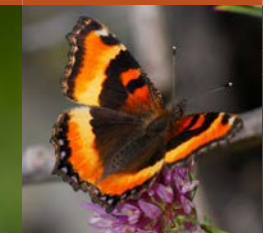


Figure 6



SWALLOWTAILS

FAMILY: Papilionidae
WINGSPAN: 5-10 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Large butterflies
- ▶ Swift, sailing flight pattern
- ▶ Unhooked antenna
- ▶ Less wing loading, allowing them to soar
- ▶ Can possess hind wing extensions (tails)



Figure 7

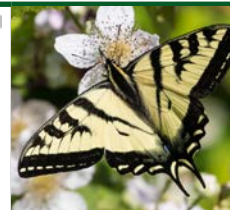


Figure 8



WHITES AND SULPHURS

FAMILY: Pieridae
WINGSPAN: 2.5-7 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Generally medium sized
- ▶ Predominantly yellow or white in most species
- ▶ Bright orange wingtips and striking black marginal patterns are common



Figure 9



Figure 10



METALMARKS

FAMILY: Riodinidae
WINGSPAN: 1.2-6 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Small to medium sized butterflies
- ▶ Many have small metallic markings on their wings
- ▶ Mainly brown, orange and black
- ▶ Often land underneath leaves close to the ground



Figure 11

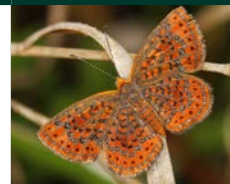


Figure 12



IDENTIFYING BUTTERFLIES

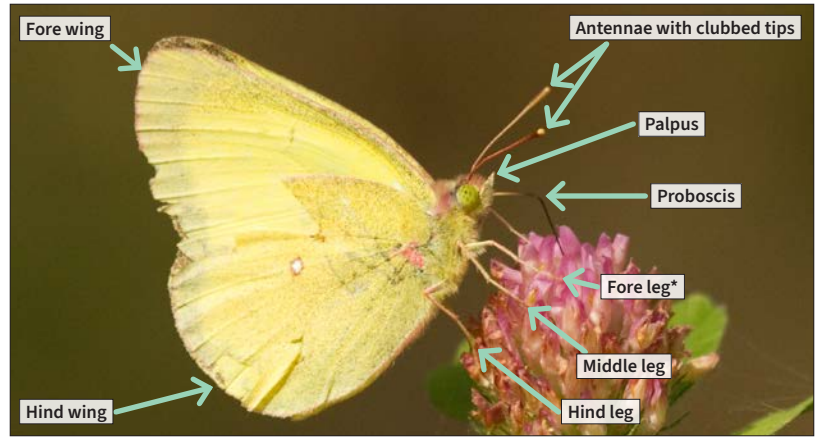
Butterflies can be excellent indicators of biodiversity and functioning ecosystems. They are easily recognizable and iconic floral visitors. Butterflies and moths both belong to the insect order Lepidoptera. Lepidoptera are a diverse order of insects with more than 12,000 species in North America. Moths make up most of this diversity, but there are approximately 800 butterfly species north of Mexico. NOTE: See below for tips on differentiating between butterflies and moths.

RECOGNIZING BUTTERFLY GROUPS

With practice, butterflies can be identified to family by observing characteristics such as size, color, wing patterns, and flight patterns. The sections on the opposite page describe common characteristics of six butterfly families:

- › Skippers (FAMILY: Hesperiidae)
- › Gossamer wings (FAMILY: Lycaenidae)
- › Brushfoots (FAMILY: Nymphalidae)
- › Swallowtails (FAMILY: Papilionidae)
- › Whites and Sulphurs (FAMILY: Pieridae)
- › Metalmarks (FAMILY: Riodinidae)

Figure 13: BASIC BUTTERFLY ANATOMY



*NOTE: The fore legs of brushfoots are much reduced, making them appear to only have four legs.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Butterflies can be distinguished from moths by the way they hold their wings at rest and by their antennae. Butterflies hold their wings open or vertically closed over their bodies, while moths tend to hold their wings flat. Butterfly antennae are club-shaped at the tips, while moth antennae either taper to a point or have a feathery appearance.

BUTTERFLIES

WINGSPAN: 2–10 cm
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

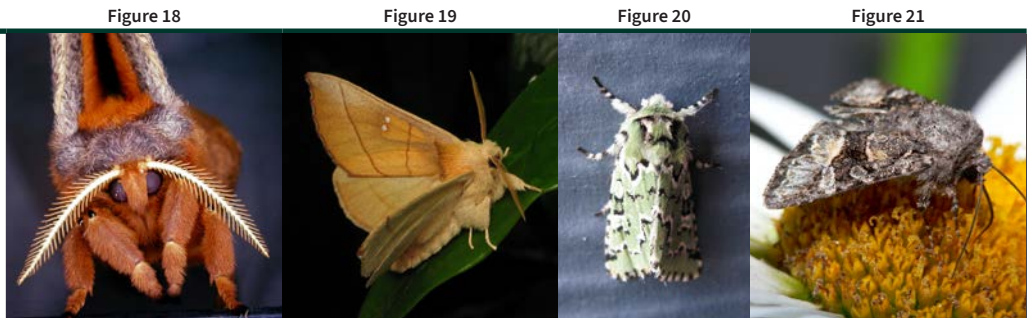
- › Butterflies are often brightly colored (Figure 14)
- › Butterflies fly by day
- › A butterfly's antenna is a single filament with a clubbed or hooked tip (Figure 15)
- › Butterflies **tend** to hold their wings either partially open (Figure 16) or closed vertically over their bodies (Figure 17)



MOTHS*

WINGSPAN: 1.1–16.5 cm (excluding micro-moths)
KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- › Moth antennae may be broad and feathery (usually males, Figure 18), or a single filament that tapers to a point (females)
- › Moths are often harrier and have more robust bodies than butterflies (Figure 19)
- › Moths **tend** to hold their wings flat with fore wings covering hind wings (Figure 20)
- › Moths **tend*** to be colored in muted grays and browns (Figure 21)
- › Moths **tend*** to fly at night



*NOTE: SOME MOTHS ARE BRIGHTLY COLORED AND FLY BY DAY. THE MOST RELIABLE METHODS OF IDENTIFICATION ARE THE ANTENNAE AND WING POSITION.

*Please note that these illustrations are based off of national averages—individual bees or local populations may vary.

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