

# Common Butterflies of Griffith Park

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This guide is meant for use within Griffith Park and elsewhere potentially in Los Angeles County. In 2011 we verified the presence of 36 species within the park's boundaries. Participation in the surveying and understanding of the Griffith Park butterfly community is strongly encouraged and I hope that this guide will help facilitate that. If you see any butterflies, or better yet, have pictures of them I encourage you to email me (chlosyne@gmail.com). This is an experiment in citizen science and I thank you for participating. Details can be found below.

## ***Papilio zelicaon* (Anise Swallowtail)**



*P. zelicaon* can be commonly found throughout the park at most times of the year. Compared to the other *Papilio* species in the park, *P. zelicaon* is slightly smaller and has a very distinctive wing pattern. *P. zelicaon* is most easily found on ridge tops within the park.

Wingspan: 4"

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Tauschia*, *Lomatium*, *Foeniculum*, *Daucus*

## ***Papilio eurymedon* (Pale Swallowtail)**



*P. eurymedon* can be quite abundant during the spring and early summer months and is often present in some numbers through most of the year. *P. eurymedon* is most readily distinguished from *P. rutulus* by its pale whitish color (*P. rutulus* is more yellow). Its habitat is usually natural/ undisturbed areas and is most abundant in the park's interior and on hill tops.

Wingspan: 4"

Flight period: Feb - Oct

Host plants: *Rhamnus*, *Ceanothus*, *Prunus ilicifolia*

## ***Papilio rutulus* (Western Tiger Swallowtail)**



*P. rutulus* can be found scattered through most of the park through most of the year. Generally not as abundant as *P. eurymedon* in the park and tends to be found more commonly in disturbed habitat patches (e.g. the park's boundaries at the urban-natural interface). *P. rutulus* is more obviously yellow than *P. eurymedon*.

Wingspan: 5"

Flight period: Feb - Oct

Host plants: *Populus*, *Salix*, *Platanus*

## ***Pieris rapae* (Cabbage White)**



If you see a white butterfly flying in the park chances are high that it is *P. rapae*. Introduced to the U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *P. rapae* is now easily the most common butterfly in the city and it is well-adapted to the urban environment. This is probably the most abundant butterfly in the park and can be found there anytime. They are somewhat variable ranging from white to shades of yellow.

Wingspan: 2"

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Brassicaceae*, *Trapaolum majus*

***Pontia protodice* (Checkered White)**



*P. protodice* is relatively uncommon in the park (especially relative to *P. rapae*) but can be found reliably in natural habitats within the park throughout the year. The ever so slightly “checked” pattern on the wing distinguishes it from *P. rapae* (which has nothing more than a dot on the wing).

Wingspan: 2”

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Brassicaceae*, *Cleome*

***Anthocharis sara* (Sara Orangetip)**



It is hard to mistake *A. sara* for anything else in the park when you see the white and orange flashes flying past. *A. sara* can be found throughout most of the park in the spring and early summer months. The butterfly is not abundant within the park but can be reliably found in the right part of the season in the right habitat (more common in undisturbed habitat).

Wingspan: 1.5”

Flight period: Feb-June

Host plants: *Brassicaceae*

***Danaus plexippus* (Monarch)**



The Monarch, *D. plexippus*, can be found all year and can be found almost anywhere within the park. Most frequently seen, seemingly, flying quickly through with other destinations on its mind.

Wingspan: 5”

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Asclepias*

***Agraulis vanillae* (Gulf Fritillary)**



*A. vanillae* is another newcomer (relatively) to Los Angeles having been introduced at some point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The butterfly is now very common throughout the year especially in urban gardens and habitats. Its appearance is variable (the pictured specimen is rather dark) but few species can match its bright orange top and flashy silvery undersides.

Wingspan: 3”

Flight period: Feb-Nov

Host plants: *Passiflora*

***Vanessa cardui* (Painted Lady)**



*V. cardui* is an extremely widely distributed butterfly and can be found throughout most of the year anywhere in the park. It can be distinguished from its congeners (*V. annabella* and *V. virginiensis* [not pictured]) by the greater proportion of black on the topside of its wings, especially at the forward edge.

Wingspan: 2.5”

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Asteraceae*

***Vanessa annabella* (West Coast Lady)**



*V. annabella* is abundant throughout most of the year in most habitats in the park. Note the large orange bar within the black markings at the forward edge of the wing which distinguishes it from other *Vanessa* species.

Wingspan: 2.5"

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Malvaceae*, *Urticaceae*

***Nymphalis antiopa* (Mourning Cloak)**



If you are anywhere near water keep an eye out for *N. antiopa*. The species flies throughout the year and is commonly found throughout the park but especially common in riparian habitat. The large butterfly and fast flyer is unmistakable from other species with its characteristic black with white wing edges.

Wingspan: 3.5"

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Salix*, *Populus*

***Junonia coenia* (Common Buckeye)**



Flying from the spring into late fall, *J. coenia* exhibits colorful and flashy eyespots on its wing with a brown background. A very strong and fast flyer this butterfly can often be identified from a distance by its quick and erratic flight patterns. Generally not abundant within the park but can be found in most habitats.

Wingspan: 2.5"

Flight period: Mar - Nov

Host plants: *Plantago*, *Mimulus*

***Apodemia virgulti*  
(Mormon Metalmark)**



*A. virgulti* is a very locally distributed butterfly and can be found in only a few select spots within the park restricted to natural sage scrub and chaparral habitat. Though spectacularly patterned, this butterfly is very small and easy to miss. It flies in the spring and in the fall but is uncommon (but not rare).

Wingspan: 1"

Flight period: Mar - Oct

Host plants: *Eriogonum fasciculatum*

***Strymon melinus* (Gray Hairstreak)**



Accurately described as the Gray Hairstreak, *S. melinus* is a scattered but somewhat common butterfly in the park. While it can be found throughout most of the park it is most common in natural habitat. Its gray underside with one series of parallel orange and white stripes is characteristic. The top of the butterfly is dark gray and mostly nondescript.

Wingspan: 1"

Flight period: May - July

Host plants: *Malva*, *Humulus*, *Amorpha*, *Nolina*, *Polygonum*, *Eriogonum*

***Callophrys augustinus* (Brown Elfin)**



*C. augustinus* flies early in the spring and can be common in scrub and chaparral habitat. The brown and mostly drab butterfly does have distinct black and slight purplish markings and also has a characteristic nub towards the bottom of its wings.

Wingspan: 1"

Flight period: March - April

Host plants: *Cuscuta*, *Ceanothus*, *Chlorogalum*



***Callophrys perplexa*  
(Bramble Hairstreak)**



*C. perplexa* is another flashy butterfly that is easy to miss due its small size. The bright green and orange are unmistakable. The flight period is early spring with a distinct peak in March (near St. Patrick's day perhaps!). Like *C. augustinus* the Bramble Hairstreak is most common in natural scrub and chaparral habitat.

Wingspan: 1"

Flight period: March - April

Host plants: *Eriogonum*, *Lotus scoparius*

***Leptotes marina* (Marina Blue)**



Typically the most common blue butterfly in the park, *L. marina* is well-adapted to urban ecosystems and can be very numerous in some places. *L. marina* gets its name from its aqua blue color on the top of its wings (it is not a sea-faring butterfly). It flies throughout the year.

Wingspan: 1"

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Fabaceae*, *Plumbago*

***Plebejus acmon* (Acmon Blue)**



*P. acmon* does not appear to be abundant in the park but it is present throughout most habitats in the area. It flies through most of the year except winter. Does not seem to aggregate like *L. marina*.

Wingspan: 1"

Flight period: March - Nov

Host plants: *Lotus*, *Astragalus*, *Trifolium*, *Eriogonum*

***Euphilotes bernardino*  
(Bernardino Blue)**



Flying during the early summer, *E. bernardino* can be abundant at the right time of the season. This is one of the smallest butterflies in the park and it looks the part. Other than size, the butterfly can be distinguished from other blues (e.g. *P. acmon*) by its bold and distinct spotting.

Wingspan: 0.5"

Flight period: May - June

Host plants: *Eriogonum*

### ***Celastrina echo* (Echo Azure)**



If you see a pair sky blue butterflies dancing atop bushes on a hilltop in the park, there is a good chance you are looking at *C. echo*. Flight period is spring to early summer and is generally uncommon (though at times it can be numerous especially in the right habitat). The wing patterning is distinct though it could be confused with *Glaucopsyche lygdamus* which also occurs in the park (*G. lygdamus* is more “spotty”).

Wingspan: 1”

Flight period: Feb - May

Host plants: *Brassicaceae*, *Cleome*

### ***Hylephila phyleus* (Fiery Skipper)**



At the urban interface and within, *H. phyleus* is the most common butterfly on the lawn. It likes grass and can be found commonly in yards and in the park, at the boundaries especially. The small orange and mostly nondescript butterfly can be difficult to distinguish from other small orange-brown skippers. But unless you are in the park’s interior, chances are high *H. phyleus* is the one you’re looking at.

Wingspan: 1.5”

Flight period: All year

Host plants: *Cynodon dactylon*, *Poaceae*

### ***Poanes melane* (Umber Skipper)**



*P. melane* is a common skipper found in all habitats throughout the park but it especially likes riparian and water-adjacent habitats (there are many in the Ferndell area). It is the only dark brown skipper of its size.

Wingspan: 1”

Flight period: March - Nov

Host plants: *Poaceae*

### ***Erynnis funeralis* (Funereal Duskywing)**

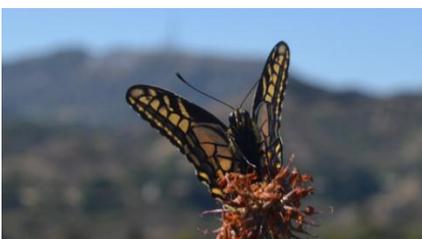


Duskywings are almost a certainty to be seen if traveling through native scrub or chaparral at almost any time of the year. We have at least two species in the park, *E. funeralis* and *E. tristis*. Distinguishing the two is very difficult to do when they are on the wing. They are especially common on hilltops and ridges throughout the park. Each has a distinctive white border on the hind wing edge.

Wingspan: 1.5”

Flight period: Feb - Nov

Host plants: *Lotus scoparius*, *Fabaceae*



This guide only represents 23 of the at least 36 butterfly species known to occur at the park (there are likely as many as 45 possible species in the park if not more). This research is a collaborative effort with Dan Cooper and the Griffith Park Natural History Survey. All photos presented here were taken at Griffith Park by Tim Bonebrake (except for the Monarch, taken at UCLA and the elfin, taken by Dan Cooper). For more information on butterflies of the area see *An Introduction to Southern California Butterflies* (Heath 2004) or *The Butterflies of Southern California* (Emmel and Emmel 1973). Excellent online resources are also available for butterfly identification and information. The production of this guide was made possible by the generous contributions made to the 2011 #SciFund Challenge – Urban Butterfly Blues Project.