Butterflies of Northeast Iowa

Look for butterflies in fields, meadows, marshes, and other open areas that have lots of flowers and some open water.

Clouded Sulphur

- Look for: yellow wings with dark borders and spots
- Adult feeds on alfalfa, clovers, milkweeds, and asters
- Sometimes called the "mud puddle" butterfly because they like to hang out at puddles

Cabbage White

- Look for: white wings with darker tips; males have one spot on their wings; females have two
- Caterpillars eat vegetables like cabbage and broccoli

Black Swallowtail

- Look for : mostly black wings with yellow marks along edges, blue spots or bands on back wings, and black spot inside larger orange dot.

Great Spangled Fritillary

Tops of wings

Undersides of wings

- Look for: top of wings tan to orange with black marks at tips and darker color closer to body; undersides of wings have wide, pale band near edges and large silver spots.
- Adults feed on a variety of flowers found in open, moist places.

Milbert's Tortoiseshell

- Look for: tops of wings have wide, dark brown edge and a bright orange or yellow band inside of that; back wings have row of small, blue spots; undersides of wings dark brown with light band along edge
- Sometimes called the "Fire-rim Tortoiseshell."
- Flies very quickly

Monarch

- Look for: orange wings with black stripes and edges and white spots along edges
- Migrates to Mexico!
- Caterpillars eat only milkweed plants, but adults eat nectar from many flowers
- Poisonous to predators like birds and frogs, but not humans.

Painted Lady

- Look for: mostly orange wings with black tips with 5 white spots
- Strange, corkscrew flight pattern.
- Adults and caterpillars eat lots of different plants.
- Adults live only two weeks.

Pearl Crescent

- Look for: orange wings with dark squiggle marks
- Likes to hang out along the edges of woods and in open fields.

Summer Azure

- Look for: pale blue on top and white underneath
- Caterpillars have a special relationship with ants. The caterpillars give the ants a sugar substance to eat, and the ants protect the caterpillars.

Red Admiral

- Look for: back wings with red-orange stripes at the edge; front wings have an orange band and white spots near the tips.

Question Mark

Question mark on hindwing

- Look for: hooked front wings that look sharp; tops of wings red-orange with black spots; undersides brown with small, white question mark in center of back wing
- Adults prefer to eat rotting fruit, tree sap, dung, and dead meat.