

# COMMON BUTTERFLIES FUN FACTS

## Spring butterflies

The **mourning cloak** might be one of the earliest butterflies that can be seen each spring, with flights beginning as soon as early March, and the **red admiral** soon follows in late March.

The **cabbage white** soon follows with flights beginning as soon as early April. The pearl crescent overwinters in Iowa and can hatch in early April, with multiple broods through late October.

The **common checkered-skipper** doesn't overwinter in Iowa, but it can be seen throughout the year. The first butterflies arrive from the south in early April, and some have been seen as late as November.



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## Painted lady

### 1. The painted lady isn't picky.

Unlike many butterflies that have certain host plants that they lay eggs on and that caterpillars eat — the monarch butterfly host plant is milkweed — the painted lady has been noted to have more than 100 host plants. Caterpillars will eat thistles, hollyhocks and legumes. It is sometimes called the thistle butterfly because it likes thistles.

As an adult, the butterflies enjoy nectar from many different flowers too — thistles, asters, blazing star, ironweed, Joe pye weed and more.

### 2. They're found around the world.

Painted lady butterflies aren't limited to the U.S. or even North America. In fact, they are found on all continents except Australia and Antarctica. It is the most widely-distributed butterfly in the world.

### 3. Painted ladies are tougher than their name sounds.

Painted ladies migrate seasonally and can fly up to 100 miles per day at nearly 30 miles per hour. They don't stay in cold regions during the winter, but you might see them later in the season than monarchs because painted ladies can migrate so quickly.

### 4. They live in silk houses.

Some caterpillars like to stay covered as a protection. For instance, red admiral caterpillars live in the shelter of folded leaves. Painted ladies weave a tent-like structure from silk, and you can often see these fluffy shelter on thistles.

### 5. Painted ladies have good camouflage.

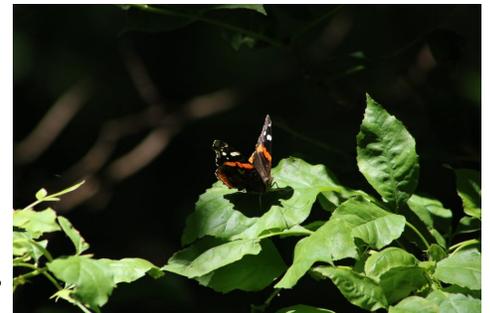
Although they are bright orange, white and brownish-black on top, painted ladies are a mottled brown when their wings are closed. It helps them to easily blend into their surroundings.

## Red admiral

### 1. They like stinging nettle.

We've all reached down to pull a weed and realized too late that it was a nettle. Your hand literally stings from the touch. However, red admiral caterpillars love nettles. It is their host plant, which means that is what red admirals lay eggs on and what their caterpillars eat. For all you homebrewers, caterpillars may also share your love and eat hops.

Adult red admirals forage nectar from a variety of native flowers including asters, golden-rod, wild bergamot, milkweed and other butterfly favorites.



## **2. Red admirals also migrate.**

Although they don't migrate quite as far, red admirals also migrate from their northernmost regions to southern Texas to overwinter. However, some red admirals that live during the warm season in warm areas stay there through the winter as well.

## **3. Caterpillars nest.**

We don't often see caterpillars do anything but crawl and eat. However, red admiral caterpillars like to stay covered. Young caterpillars live in the shelter of folded leaves while older caterpillars will make a nest of leaves tied together with silk.

## **4. There is more than one admiral in the world.**

There are more than just red admirals in the Nymphalidae family. The western U.S. has the Weidemeyer's admiral; the white admiral lives in North America, Great Britain, Eurasia and Japan; the Indian red admiral is found in the Canary Islands and India.

## **5. Red admirals have different colors in different life stages.**

They begin as a green eggs on a host plant and hatch into a black caterpillar with spiky hairs.

## **Viceroy**

### **1. Viceroys are mimics.**

Viceroy butterflies mimic monarch butterflies, and it was long thought that was because the monarch was toxic and distasteful to predators while the viceroy was not. However, in the early 1990s, scientists found that viceroys are also distasteful to predators, and their bright colors are a warning. The mimicry actually then goes both ways.

### **2. Viceroys aren't picky eaters.**

Most adult butterflies feed on nectar, and the viceroy does too. However, viceroys also eat dung, carrion and fungus.

Viceroy caterpillars are white and black and eat the leaves of willow and poplar trees.

### **3. Multiple generations live in one season.**

Like many insect creatures, there are multiple viceroy generations each summer.

The butterflies mate in the afternoon, and females lay their eggs on the tips of poplar and willow leaves. There are usually two-three generations of viceroys that hatch each breeding season.

### **5. They don't migrate.**

Unlike their lookalike, the monarch, viceroy butterflies do not migrate. Instead, caterpillars in the first or second instar — or stage — will hibernate, rolled up in a willow or poplar leaf. Because of this, you won't usually see a viceroy butterfly until about 15 days after willow or poplar leaves emerge each year.

### **6. Viceroys fly differently.**

You can tell a monarch in flight from a viceroy, because monarch butterflies tend to float whereas viceroys will flap, flap, glide. The viceroy flight is faster and more erratic.