

Identifying and Attracting Texas Butterflies – Part II

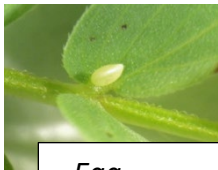
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Big Country Master Gardener



Little Yellow (*Pyristia lisa*, (previously classed as *Eurema lisa*)) are a pale to light yellow (with a little orangish tint) with a narrow black border and two small dots, and have a large pink to rust colored spot,



often missing or fainter on males, at the top corner, of their hindwings. Little Yellows darken in color and become more heavily patterned with rosy-pink fringe as summer ends. Common throughout Central America and southeastern North America, these small Butterflies (1-1/4 to 1-3/4") are fast and tend to fly erratically through meadows, grassy underbrush and roadsides searching for nectar from many flowering plants but, especially, Asters and Goldenrod. They rarely sit with open wings. They lay their eggs singly on their larvae's hosts



Egg

Partridge Pea (*Cassia fasciculata*), Bundleflower (*Demanthus vigatus*) and Wild sensitive plants (*C. nicians*). The eggs hatch the caterpillar in about 6 days. The caterpillars live for close to a month, eating host plant



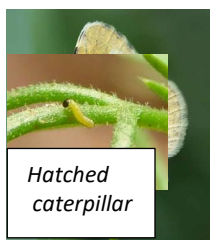
Chrysalis

leaves, before forming the chrysalis, which camouflages itself among the dry twigs of the host, then births the butterfly. Males patrol for females during warm sunny days and adults live about 10 days and produce several generations.



Caterpillar

They overwinter in reproductive diapause (embryo, larva and pupal stays undeveloped until weather warms) and recolonize from warm frost-free regions. As summer gets hotter, they push north then reverse migrate south again in fall.

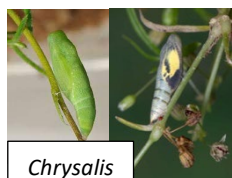


Hatched caterpillar

Dainty Sulfur (*Nathalis iole*), are similar to Little Yellow butterflies, but the Dainty are the smallest North American Sulfur (3/4 – 1-1/4”) with yellow long forewings with black spots. In winter the hindwing is muted green and light yellow in summer. Males search for mates close to

the ground of coastal flats, grasslands, roadsides, meadows and fields. They seek nectar from many blooming plants including Asters, Marigolds, Composites

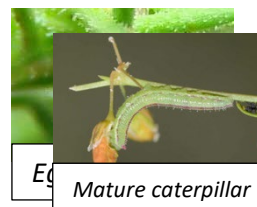
(daisy/sunflower), and Rabbitbush. The females then lay eggs singly on the leaves of their host plants, Asters like Shepherd’s needle, Sneezeweed, Tiny Tim, Chickweed, Dogwood, Spanish needles, fetid and cultivated Marigolds.



Chrysalis

The eggs hatch within a week and the yellow caterpillar

eats the egg case and, within an hour, begins to transition to dark green and feast on the leaves of its host. After about 2 weeks the caterpillar forms the green chrysalis, which darkens as the butterfly prepares to emerge. The butterfly hatches in about a week. Unable to survive cold winters, they recolonize each summer from as far as Guatemala, California, Arizona and the gulf states north as far as Washington, Wyoming and Minnesota, then return south as the weather cools. They produce multiple generations before dying off in winter.



Eggs

Mature caterpillar



Female

Orange Sulfur (*Colias eurytheme*) are extremely common in North America, from Mexico to southern Canada and **can** vary coloration by sex. Males are bright yellow and orange, yellow veined, with a wide black border and

a dark cell spot. Often, females, who are larger than males, have white or yellow (in wet climates) and yellow with reddish orange bands in dry climates, to slightly green with an irregular border of black with light spots and hindwing has two spots, a silver spot with 2 dark rings and 2 rings above that. They feed on nectar of many flowers in open areas but

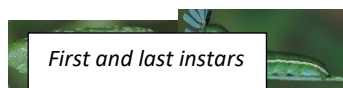


Male



Egg

favor Dandelions, Goldenrod, Asters, and Milkweeds. They can come in as pests in large swarms to alfalfa fields from time to time. They lay their eggs on their caterpillar’s hosts of Alfalfa, white sweet Clover, Vetch and other plants in the Pea (aster) family, where they can be

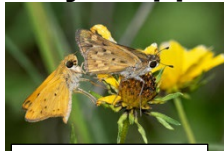


First and last instars



very destructive. They can be found in open areas, meadows and along roadsides. Often, males will cluster “mud-puddling”, sipping salts and minerals in water to aid in mating. Males look for the female’s ultraviolet light absorbing on their hind wings (male’s wings reflect ultraviolet light). Females choose males by amount of UV reflection and pheromones to find the best sperm bearer. She lays one egg at a time on the caterpillar’s host’s leaves which then hatch in about 5 days. The caterpillar goes through several instars, eating continuously until it pupates about 30 days later. When the butterfly emerges, it is ready to mate in about 4 days. Females find a new mate every few days in the summer, laying close to 1,000 eggs in her lifetime.

Firey Skipper (*Hylephila phyleus*) have very short antennae and grow to



Male & Female

about 1” wingspan. Males are orange with dark scales, called stigma. The outer wing edge has a dark border. Females are browner with orange markings. Males wait on lawns, plants and grassy areas, near flowers where they eat



Eggs

nectar, to await females. They are strongly attracted to Butterfly Milkweed, Zinnias, Coneflowers, Black-eyed Susans, Phlox, Gayfeather, Asters, and Goldenrod. Mating happens quickly after the butterfly hatches from the pupa, The adults live about 1 to 2 weeks. It takes about 20 days from egg to adult skipper. Females lay eggs singly under the leaves of her host plants of Bermuda grass, St. Augustine, crabgrass, Nutsedge, and other grasses. When caterpillars hatch they eat leaves at night, tie and roll them, then tie them with silk, then lie in them (for shelter) on the grass or a



Caterpillar

little below ground during the day. They are hatched green but turn light brown with small black spots, and dark narrow stripes, as they mature.

They have a black head and can reach up

to 1” long. They pupate in their shelter. Firey

skippers have several broods in the southern parts of their range and usually at least one more in their northern range.



Chrysalis



Top female

Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) are large, 3-4” wing span, black with centered orange spots that look like eyes. Females lay 30 to 50 eggs, singly, on the leaves and flowers of her hosts Queen Anne’s Lace, Dill, Fennel, Parsley and Celery, She can lay up to 450 eggs



Eggs

during her short lifetime. The adults eat nectar from many flower, herbs and vegetables, as well as Butterfly Bush, purple Coneflower, Clover, Milkweeds and Thistles. Their range is from South America to most of the eastern U.S. and west from California to parts of Canada. Some



Egg hatching

overwinter in chrysalis, emerging as adults in the spring. They can emit a bad smell to deter predators.

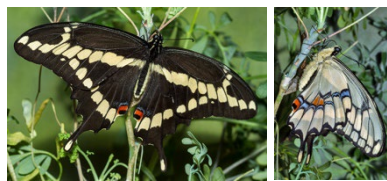
You will find them in open fields, farms and gardens. The egg hatches within 5-10 days, then the caterpillar lives 3 to 4 weeks going through five instars then form the chrysalis that hatches the adult in 10 to 20 days, unless overwintering. Adults live 1 to 2 weeks, producing many broods. They begin life as tiny caterpillars that look like bird droppings and eventually change to white to bright green with black stripes and yellow spots.



Stages, instar



Chrysalis



Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) are fast fliers and are the largest of the swallowtails, measuring up to a 6-1/4" wingspan. Females are larger than males and

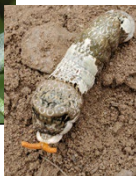
females and males have very little differences in pattern and coloration. Their range, April through October, is throughout the south to much of the eastern U.S. Most fly north each summer while others continuously live and migrate about in the south and Florida. Adults seek nectar of Milkweeds, Lantana, Butterfly Bush, Zinnias and other flowering plants. And moisture and nutrients from puddles and wet ground.



Egg & caterpillars



Mature caterpillar



Females lay two broods each year and lay their eggs on hosts like Citrus, Lime, Prickly Ash, Hoptrees, and Rue. Caterpillars hatch and go through 5 instars and are camouflaged by looking like bird

droppings atop the host plants they eat. When in danger, they show a pair of orange glands that look like horns and emit a foul smell. They overwinter as chrysalis, which the caterpillar attaches to the host with silk threads.



Chrysalis

If you have any questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you visit bcmgtx.org for information on all Big Country Master Gardener events, like us on BCMGA

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