

Red Admiral

A common garden species, this is one of the nettle butterflies, whose caterpillars feed on Stinging Nettle. Adults may overwinter here. As well as flowers, tree sap and animal dung attract adults.



- Stinging Nettle
- Thistle, Butterfly Bush, Mock-Orange



Western Arctic Skipper

Not truly “arctic”, this species frequents forest clearings, sunny meadows and trail sides. Besides flowers, mud puddles also attract adults. Like all skippers, this one’s antennae are curved and the ends are shaped like elongated clubs.



- Grasses
- Large-leaved Avens, Clover, Dandelion, Herb-Robert



Echo Azure

The dazzling bright blue of the male is striking. The female has less blue and more brown; there is a “dark band” around the outer margins of her wings. Watch for it in early spring on flowers, at mud puddles, or atop horse droppings, sipping vital nutrients or minerals.



- Red-osier Dogwood, Hardhack, Elderberry
- Red-flowering Currant, Violet, Heather, Siberian Miner’s Lettuce



Lorquin’s Admiral

Males of this species are territorial and will patrol their chosen areas. Besides nectaring on flowers, adults may feed on carrion, rotting fruit and animal dung. Mud puddles also attract them.



- Willow, Aspen, Cottonwood
- Yarrow, Thistle, Aster



European Skipper

As its name suggests, this skipper was introduced from Europe; it is now well established here. The wings are mostly a uniform orange, instead of having distinct patterns like our other two skippers.



- Grasses
- Tansy, Vetch, Dandelion, Thistle



Cedar Hairstreak

Another small butterfly that may be hard to spot, this brownish one has a fine white line on its wings. Its name offers a clue – look for it on cedar trees!



- Western Redcedar, Juniper
- Oregon-grape, Yarrow, Buttercup, Oxeye Daisy, Clover, Dandelion



Painted Lady

This is one of the “thistle butterflies”; both caterpillars and adults like thistles. A long-distance migrant, it can be abundant in some years. Locally, school children release captive-raised ones on a regular basis. In the wild, close to where it feeds, the black caterpillar makes a silk nest.



- Thistle, Mallow, Sunflower, Pearly Everlasting
- Thistle, Aster, Butterfly Bush, Coneflower



Woodland Skipper

This is our most common native skipper. It nectars on a wide variety of flowers and is somewhat tamer than other butterflies. You may be able to get near enough for a close look or a close-up photo.



- Grasses
- Aster, Thistle, Tansy, Yarrow, Mint



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2025 Edition. Front cover photos (clockwise from top): Milbert’s Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Western Tiger Swallowtail

Butterflies in Langley



Your handy guide to attracting, identifying and enjoying butterflies in the Langley area

Cabbage White C

A European species, it is one of our most common butterflies. It is well known to gardeners, in both its adult and greenish caterpillar forms, and has several broods per summer and autumn. Habitat is sunny meadows and gardens where adults nectar from garden flowers.



- Cabbage family
- Dandelion, Herb-Robert, Aster, Mint



Western Pine Elfin O

Small but beautiful – this elfin has an array of subtle, diverse colours and patterns. As with some other species, the name offers a clue as to where you might find it – on pine trees!



- Pine
- Mustard family, Dandelion



Mourning Cloak C

A widespread species, it visits forest edges, meadows and gardens. As the adults overwinter, it is possible to see them on warm winter days. The yellowish wing margins will look paler in overwintering adults. As well as landing on flowers, it likes to visit horse droppings.



- Willow, Alder, Maple, Cottonwood
- Red-flowering Currant, Aster, Lilac



Western Tiger Swallowtail C

Langley’s largest butterfly is a fast, powerful flyer. Its tiger-like stripes may serve as a warning to birds: don’t eat me – I might be poisonous! The caterpillars have “false eyes” to scare away predators. This distinctive butterfly is as beautiful as the flowers it lands on.



- Maple, Willow, Aspen, Cottonwood
- Red-osier Dogwood, Blackberry, Tiger Lily

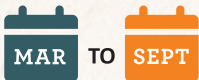


Margined White C

One of our earliest butterflies, it is seen along sunny trails and forest edges. It could be mistaken for a “cabbage” but look for its darker veins. Campbell Valley Regional Park is a good place to watch for adults hovering around Cardamine (Winter Cress).



- Mustard family
- Salmonberry, Dandelion, Herb-Robert, Cardamine



Brown Elfin O

This small butterfly has lovely subtle colours, as well as the brown. Not easy to spot, it may blend in with background colours. Caterpillars and adults are most often seen in Langley’s bog habitat.



- Salal, Kinnikinnick, Labrador Tea
- Salal, Cranberry, Labrador Tea



Milbert’s Tortoiseshell C

Watch for this colourful butterfly in gardens, forest edges and meadows. Like other “nettle butterflies”, the caterpillars feed only on Stinging Nettle. Richard Bear, in “Garden Butterflies of the Georgia Basin”, noted that “some of the pupae are coloured gold like a polished Yukon nugget”.



- Stinging Nettle
- Dandelion, Pearly Everlasting, Aster, Thistle



Rarities



Clodius Parnassian



California Tortoiseshell



Compton’s Tortoiseshell



Butterfly or Moth?

Butterfly antennae are slender and end in little knobs.

Moth antennae lack knobs and some can even be feathery.

Clouded Sulphur O

The bright yellow of a sulphur butterfly is hard to miss. Although we have other sulphurs pass through occasionally, the Clouded Sulphur is the one most likely to be seen in Langley. Pay close attention to the spots on the wings – they may give you clues as to which species it is!



- Alfalfa, Clover, Vetch
- Alfalfa, Clover, Aster



Mariposa Copper O

This charming little species is best identified by its black-and-white checkered fringe. Also, the top wings of males have a distinctive purplish hue. Adults feed on a variety of flowers; caterpillars are more restricted to plants that occur in Langley’s bog habitat.

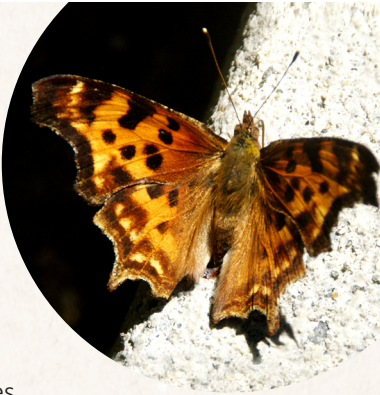


- Bog Cranberry, Blueberry, Bilberry
- Pearly Everlasting, Yarrow, Aster, Stonecrop, Hardhack



Satyr Comma C

Now you see it, now you don’t! When a Comma folds its wings, it suddenly looks like a dead leaf! Then you can watch for the small silvery “commas” on the underwings. It can often be seen on flowers along forest edges, on tree trunks where there is sap, or at mud puddles.



- Stinging Nettle
- Cascara, Thistle, Lilac



C Common  
O Occasional

C Caterpillar Food  
A Adult Food