

# Mackinac Offers Diverse Habitats for Butterflies

Along with the reappearance of our spring flowers, warmer days, and the returning of our migrating snow birds, the reemergence of butterflies is another sure sign that spring is here and summer is soon to follow. As I've been walking or riding throughout the Island, my eye has been caught by several species of butterflies flitting around in the sun.

Michigan is fortunate in having so many interesting and diverse, not to mention unique, habitats for butterflies. Because of this, sightings of previously unlisted butterflies in our state are not uncommon. Many portions of the Upper Peninsula have been poorly collected, along with the higher elevations of the western counties and many of the islands. To date there are at least 159 species of butterflies and skippers recorded in Michigan. Of these, 137 can be classified as year-around residents, the others being frequent or accidental visitors or migrants from the south.

The first butterfly that I saw on the Island this spring was the Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*). This butterfly is in the family Pieridae and contains medium to small yellow to white butterflies, frequently with black borders or markings. The Cabbage White is one of the most common members of this family. Both sexes are white with blackish tips on the forewing. Usually the males have one black spot and females have two. Yellowish scales cover the tips of the forewing and hindwing on the underside. This time of year, in the spring, the specimens are frequently all white.

The eggs of this insect are laid on a wide variety of wild



## Nature Notes

By  
Patricia Martin



Upper View of Male Morning Cloak

and cultivated plants in the mustard family. The caterpillar is greenish with faint yellow stripes on the backs and sides. They're covered with short, fine hairs. The young larvae may become pests on cabbages (hence the name), kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, or cauliflower. As adults these cabbage butterflies feed on nectar from a great variety of flowers or domesticated and wild plants. Some of these include catnip, goldenrod, knapweed, and the dreaded purple loosestrife. These butterflies are commonly seen around mud puddles, where they sip moisture and gain nutrients.

You can find these butterflies in many locales on Mackinac. They prefer gardens, old fields, roadsides, and dis-

turbed areas. They produce three broods a year and may be seen from the end of March until near the end of December. Despite the fact that the cabbage butterfly was introduced to North America, it is now one of Michigan's most abundant butterflies.

The second butterfly that I saw this spring was the Morning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*). It is a member of a family of butterflies referred to as the brushfoots (family nymphalidae). This is a family of butterflies with numerous members whose size ranges from small to large. They have a variety of colors, though frequently orange and brown, with many different patterns and wing shapes. The name brushfoot comes from the fact that

the male's forelegs are reduced to brush-like appendages.

The Morning Cloak is a fairly large butterfly and as adults they have upper wing surfaces that are purplish black with wide yellow margins edged with iridescent blue spots. The hind wing has a tail projection. The undersurface is dark brown and bark-like with yellowish margins.

These butterflies lay their eggs in clusters, usually on willow, but they will also use aspen, birch, elm, and hackberry. The caterpillar or larval stage of the Morning Cloak is black with small white marks and red dots and is covered with black spines. They generally feed communally at this stage.

As adults, these butterflies seldom visit flowers, as their preferred food is tree sap and overripe fruit. They also take moisture and nutrients from damp soil.

Morning Cloaks are found throughout our state, including Isle Royale, and prefer forest openings, swamps, stream margins, roadsides, the edges of woods, and can be found in both urban and rural settings.

These common butterflies produce two broods and may be seen in Michigan from the end

of March until the beginning of November. These are usually one of the first butterflies seen in the spring. In part, this is because they winter over as adults. They hibernate in wood-piles and will occasionally be found flying around during winter thaws.

Keep an eye out for these and other butterflies that flit around Mackinac. They're really fun to watch. I'll leave you with a short poem about these interesting insects. It's by Algernon Charles Swinburne, "White Butterflies."

"Fly, white butterflies, out to sea,

Frail, pale wings for the wind to try,

Small white wings that we scarce can see,

Fly!

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,

Some fly soft as a long, low sigh;

All to the haven where each would be,

Fly!"

Trish Martin is a year-around resident of Mackinac Island, has earned a master's degree in botany from Central Michigan University, and owns Bogan Lane Inn.

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### Norman D. Beauchamp

Norm, a native of Gladstone in the Upper Peninsula, is an established attorney in the Port Huron area. He specializes in business law, oil and gas law, and corporate law. In addition to an MBA from the University of Michigan and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Detroit, he is an Associate Broker with Murray Realty and a member of the National Association of Realtors, the Michigan Association of Realtors, and the Water Wonderland Board of Realtors. He is Chairman of the St. Clair County Community



College Board of Trustees and is an active member of the community. Norm has just returned from a goodwill trip to the country of Qatar where he is hoping to foster student and teacher exchange programs. On a personal level, Norm and his wife, Joyce, have raised ten children, one of whom is Anne Beauchamp Murray. It is through the Murray family that Norm has developed a love and appreciation of Mackinac Island.

"Happy Memorial Day to all.  
Bring on the Summer!"



Joyce  
Beauchamp  
Owner/Broker



Norman  
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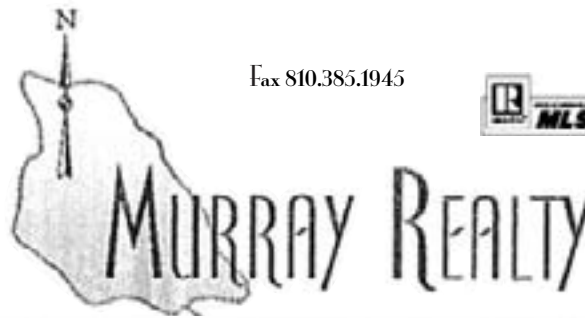


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