# Eastern Monarch Lookalikes



Butterfly identification can be challenging. Understanding different characteristics, such as color, wing patterns, size, and even flight styles, will help identify butterflies at a glance. Knowing which specific host plants butterflies lay eggs on for their caterpillars to eat will also provide important context clues.



Viceroy
*Limenitis archippus*



Monarch
*Danaus Plexxipus*



Painted Lady
*Vanessa cardui*



Eastern Comma
*Polygonia comma*



Queen
*Danaus gilippus*



Red Admiral
*Vanessa atalanta*



Pearl Crescent
*Phyciodes tharos*



Soldier
*Danaus eresimus*
Photo: Arnulfo Moreno-Valdez



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
*Papilio glaucus*



Great Spangled Fritillary
*Speyeria cibele*



Gulf Fritillary
*Agraulis vanillae*



Regal Fritillary
*Speyeria idalia*

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**Viceroy (*Limenitus archippus*)**
**Host Plant:** Willows (*Salix spp.*), cottonwood (*Populus spp.*), and others
**Wingspan:** 2.1 - 3.2"





**Queen (*Danaus gilippus*)**
**Host Plant:** Milkweeds (*Asclepias spp.*)
**Wingspan:** 3.1 - 3.3"





**Soldier (*Danaus erisiumus*)**
**Host Plant:** Milkweeds (*Asclepias spp.*)
**Wingspan:** 2.7 - 3.8″





**Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)**
**Host Plant:** Thistle (*Cirsium spp.*), mallows (*Malva spp.*), and others
**Wingspan:** 1.6 - 2.9"





**Red Admiral (*Vanessa atlanta*)**
**Host Plant:** Nettles (*Urtica spp.*)
**Wingspan:** 1.3 - 3"





**Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*)**
**Host Plant:** Magnolia (Magnoliaceae), Rose (Rosaceae) families, and others
**Wingspan:** 3 - 5.5″





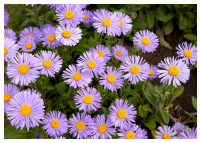
**Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*)**
**Host Plant:** Nettles (*Urtica spp.* and *Laportea spp.*), hops (*Humulus spp.*), elm (*Ulmus spp.*), and others.
**Wingspan:** 1.7 - 2.5″





**Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*)**
**Host Plant:** Native violets (*Viola spp.*)
**Wingspan:** 1.7 - 2.5″
Larva photo: Healthyyards





**Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*)**
**Host Plant:** Primarily asters (*Symphiotrichum spp.*), sometimes fleabanes (*Erigeron spp.*), and others.
**Wingspan:** 1 - 1.8"





**Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*)**
**Host Plant:** Passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*)
**Wingspan:** 2.5 - 3"





**Regal Fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*)**
**Host Plant:** Violets (*Viola spp.*)
**Wingspan:** 2.5 - 4"
Larva photo: Allyson Frank

MONARCH JOINT VENTURE

Our **mission** is to protect monarchs and their migration by collaborating with partners to deliver habitat conservation, education, and science across the monarch range.

# Eastern Monarch Lookalikes



**Viceroy (*Limenitis archippus*)**: Distinguished from monarchs by a distinct black line that crosses its hindwing. These butterflies are also slightly smaller in wingspan (2 ½ - 3 ⅜") and have a faster and more erratic flight, while monarchs tend to glide. Found across nearly all of the U.S., but most common east of the Rocky Mountains. Host plant: Willows (*Salix spp.*), cottonwood (*Populus spp.*), and others.



**Queen (*Danaus gilippus*):** Slightly smaller (2 ¾ - 3 ¾" wingspan) than monarchs and lacking the bold black lines on wing veins on the topside of wings and on the underside of forewings. Look for white spots within the black wing margins. Queens also use milkweed as a host plant, and eggs are indistinguishable from monarchs, but are typically only found in the southern latitudes of the U.S.



**Soldier (*Danaus erisiumus*):** Very similar size (2 ¾ - 3 ¾") and appearance to the **Queen (*Danaus gilippus*)**, but with more prominent black wing venation and fewer white spots inside the wing margins. Soldier butterflies are uncommon in most of the U.S. but are sometimes observed in parts of Texas & Florida. Host plant: Milkweeds (*Asclepias spp.*)



**Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*):** Wingspan 1 ½ - 3", very common throughout the U.S. Forewings have black tips with white spots, hindwings have 3 rows of dark spots along margin. *See also the closely related American Lady (*Vanessa virginienses*). Host plant: Larvae use a variety of plants, including asters (*Asteraceae*) - especially thistles, mallows (*Malvaceae)*, forget-me-nots (*Boraginaceae*), and others.



**Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*):** Wingspan of 1 ¾ - 3 inches; smaller than monarchs but sometimes confused due to similar combination of colors. Wings prominently brown/black with red-orange stripes on forewings and along hindwing edge. White spots on tips of forewings. Host plant: All members of the nettles family (Urticaceae).



**Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (*Phyciodes tharos*):** Quite large in size (3 - 5 ½"), yellow with four 'tiger stripes' on top of forewing and thick black stripe along bottom wing edge. Females have an alternate dark morph that is primarily black with blueish scales on hindwings. Host plant: Magnolia (*Magnoliaceae*) and rose (*Rosaceae*) families and others, commonly including tulip tree, sweet bay magnolia, and wild black cherry.



**Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*):** Wingspan of 1 ¾ - 2 ½", topside of wings rusty orange, dark wing margins and varied black spots. Underside of wing mimics a dead leaf and has small curved white mark resembling a comma. *See also the closely related Question Mark (*Polygonia interrogationis*). Host plant: Nettles (*Urtica spp. and Laportea spp.*), hops (*Humulus spp.*), elm (*Ulmus spp.*) and others.



**Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*):** Smaller than monarchs (1 - 1 ¾"), wings are orange with dark brown to black wing margins and a complex pattern of dark markings, with a row of spots along the inside of the wing margin. Underside of wings have a dark edge with a lighter-colored crescent shape. Host plant: primarily asters (*Symphiotrichum spp.*), sometimes fleabanes (*Erigeron spp.*), and others.



**Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cibele*):** Wingspan 2 - 4", orange wings that are darker/more brown closer to the abdomen, with varied short black stripes and two rows of crescents along wing edge. Host plant: Native violets (*Viola spp.*), including round-leaf violet (*Viola rotundifolia*), narrow-leaf violet (*Viola fimbriatula*) and common blue violet (*Viola sororia*).



**Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*):** Found most commonly in the southern half of the U.S. surrounding the Gulf of Mexico, 2 ½ - 3 ¾" in wingspan, solid vibrant orange with some black spots and a row of black rings/streaks along wing edge. Underside is brown and speckled with silvery-white dots. Host plant: Passion vines (*Passiflora spp.*)



**Regal Fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*):** Increasingly rare, found in remnant tall-grass prairie in the Midwest with some additional local colonies near the east coast. Wingspan 2 ½ - 4", deep orange forewings with dark margins and dark hindwings with two bands of spots. On males, the lower row of spots is orange, whereas on females, both rows are white. Host plant: Violets (*Viola spp.*)

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