

The butterflies of summer

BY LINDA KAPPEN

Pine White

The Pine White (*Nephasia menapia*) (see photos at right), whose habitat is coniferous forests of the Pacific Northwest, belongs to the butterfly family Pieridae. The caterpillar host plants are pines and firs. Adults nectar on composites and monarda (a genus of flowering plants in the mint family, e.g., bee balm, horsemint, bergamot, etc.). This butterfly has a wingspan of up to two inches. Males (see photo) are immaculately white while females are creamy white. Both have black markings on forewing tips; females have orange-red edgings.

The Pine White is considered a primitive butterfly with its life history being unique to the butterfly family of Pieridae. Only three butterflies in our Cascadia region are known to have larvae that feed on conifers: Pine Whites, Western Pine Elfin and Juniper Hairstreak (aka Cedar Hairstreak), which feed on junipers and cedars. Eggs are deposited on pine needles over winter. Then the larvae feed on spring growth.

They can be seen flying as adults from late June to early October. Their flight is weak, and they often look like they are floating down from the treetops. Pine Whites are a pleasure to watch in the

summer and are easily approachable.

Every 20 to 30 years a natural phenomenon occurs when there is a massive outbreak of Pine Whites. In 2010, the Malheur National Forest in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon experienced a three-year population explosion of Pine Whites. The butterflies were described as looking like a snowstorm in summer. A video and interview about this rare occurrence can be viewed at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/science-jan-june12-pinebutterfly_03-12/. I hope I am around for the next outbreak, which would be an extraordinary thing to witness.

Western Pine Elfin

The Western Pine Elfin (*Callophrys eryphon*) (see photo below) is another butterfly using pines for its larval host plant. It belongs to the family Lycaenidae and is of the subfamily Theclini (hairstreaks). They nectar on many spring blooms such as dandelions, lupine, buckwheat, pussy paws and pussy willow catkins. Males will also use mud. It is a small, tailless butterfly with a wingspan of up to one and a half inches. Its colors range from brown to purplish brown; females are more orange.

The Western Pine Elfin's habitat is pine forests with meadow openings. Being a spring-to-early summer butterfly,

it is more likely to be seen in early spring in lower elevation meadows and higher altitudes in summer depending on seasonal weather conditions.

Eggs are laid singly at the base of young pine needles, on which the larvae feed. Pupae overwinter in a physiological state called diapause (dormancy). In spring, males emerge first, perching on small trees and shrubs to wait for females. Females spend their time flying from nectar flowers at meadows to higher-elevation larval host plants.

While taking photos on the edges of a

meadow in early spring, I observed a male Western Pine Elfin repeatedly returning to perch on the same Oregon Grape plant, even though I was standing next to the plant waiting for photo opportunities.

This butterfly sits with closed wing, allowing you to see its remarkable identifying marks with bold patterns. It's another one of nature's artistic beauties.

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Ed. Note: Linda Kappen earned a naturalist certification from Siskiyou Field Institute and hosts two-day butterfly courses there.

All butterfly photos by Linda Kappen.

Pine White female



Pine White male



Western Pine Elfin



RECREATION

- **Photography.** Everywhere. Pick up your camera and see what you can find.
- **Wildflower discovery.** Begins in early spring with grouse flowers and manzanitas and is fabulous even in July at higher elevations. The botanical diversity of the Siskiyou is on display in the Applegate!
- **Wildlife viewing.** Try the wildlife blind at Lower Squaw Lake. Keep your eyes open for bears on a trail. Cougar sightings are rare. Other possibilities for quiet, sharp-eyed walkers include fishers, ring-tail cats, bobtail cats, coyotes, and porcupines. Anyone can spot ospreys at Applegate Lake. Just look up.
- **Butterfly viewing.** "Butterflies of unrivaled beauty flutter nearby" (from the Fall 2013 *Applegater*). Check out the butterfly article above.
- **Birding.** The Applegate is a great place for bird-watchers. The Audubon Society of Portland lists the Applegate River and Reservoir as one of



Camping at Jackson Campground along the Applegate River.

Photo: sououtdoorprogram.files.wordpress.com

Oregon's good birding sites and Anderson Butte/Sterling Ditch as an IBA (Important Bird Area).

In-the-air recreation

- **Paragliding.** Maybe you'd rather be a bird than look at birds. Woodrat Mountain is famous among paragliders. The 12th annual Rat Race/Sprint Paragliding Competition will be held this year from June 22 - 28, with a practice day on June 21. Registration is closed, but come and watch. Check it out at mphsports.com or at the Rogue Valley Hang Gliding and

Paragliding Association website (www.rvhpa.org).

On-the-road opportunities

- **Bicycling.** The country roads and back roads offer glorious rides, though shoulders are slim on main roads, so be cautious! Cycle Oregon came through the Applegate a few years ago, cycling over Grayback Mountain (for experts only!) and through the ghost town of Buncom. The Buncom post office opened just for the occasion.
- **Scenic driving.** It's gorgeous in the Applegate, whether in a car or on a



Combine scenic driving with wine-tasting in the Applegate. Best done with a designated driver or in a limo. Photo: antiwinesnob.com.

motorcycle. Take the back roads. Get a map. Explore.

Ball sports

- **Tennis.** The tennis court at the Applegate School is available when school is not in session.
- **Volleyball.** There's a court at Applegate Lake. Horseshoe pits too.

Other

- **Picnicking.** Picnic grounds at Applegate Lake, Squaw Lakes, Jackson Campground, Cantrall-Buckley, and McKee Bridge (alas for the loss of the Wayside Park!)—or just spread a blanket in a beautiful spot and open a basket of barbecued chicken, ripe peaches, and a bottle of local wine.
- **Camping.** You can find campgrounds at Applegate Lake, Squaw Lakes, Cantrall-Buckley, Jackson Campground (no trailers), and primitive campsites on USFS land where you can "get away from it all"—or get to it all, depending on what "it" is.
- **Wine-tasting.** Is this outdoor recreation? If so, there's plenty in the Applegate!

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Ed. Note: Land ownership in the Applegate is a checkerboard of public and private properties. Private land, which is not always marked as such, is offlimits—unless you gain prior approval of the property owner.

FROM PAGE 12