

Spotting the Chalcedona Checkerspot

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Chalcedona Checkerspot, *Euphydryas chalcedona*, arrives in the spring, giving way to thoughts of the chalcedony gemstone or the ancient Greek town of Chalcedon, which gave its name to the butterfly. It belongs to the butterfly family Nymphalidae.

This checkerspot can measure up to 2 inches with open wings. The ventral view displays brightly colored red-orange and white. On the dorsal wing the coal-black background highlights milky white markings and a red border. Other species in the genus *Euphydryas* look similar.

Males patrol and perch, searching for females. The female lays her eggs in small clusters on the stems or undersides of leaves of the host plant. Once hatched, the caterpillars will make a protective silk nest where they can safely feed on the plant. In the later stage they will hibernate in the forest litter or under rocks. They have one brood which flies in the spring.

Host plants for this butterfly are in the figwort family (Scrophulariaceae), such as penstemon, monkeyflower, and paintbrushes. The adult butterflies nectar on many wildflowers and garden variety flowers. Males will find mud or places of moisture to take in nutrients. It is important to our beneficial insects to avoid using poisonous sprays around

our lands and to find nurseries that grow their flowers through organic methods.

We can see this butterfly in flight from April through June. This butterfly has a range in the west from Alaska to Mexico and east to the intermountain states. Habitats in this range can be canyons, mountains, alpine forests, open spots in forests, streams, roadsides, chaparral, and prairies.



A Chalcedona Checkerspot chrysalis.

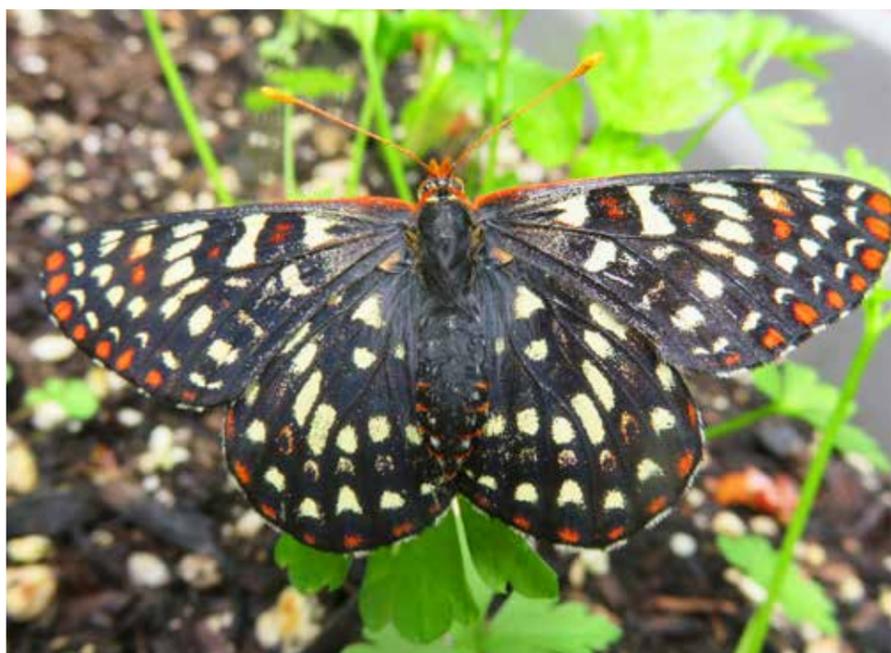
In the spring of 2020, Kellie Halsted, the second- and third-grade teacher at Applegate School, found a caterpillar at her home. I identified it as a checkerspot caterpillar. At my request she safely delivered the caterpillar to the school. I brought it home to rear and find out which checkerspot it would become.

I took a few photographs and gave them captions, and she was able to share them with her students through distance learning during our COVID-19 closure. It was a fun project and gave me pleasure to provide a local nature adventure for the children.

Linda Kappen is a southern Oregon naturalist specializing in lepidoptera. humbukkapps@hotmail.com



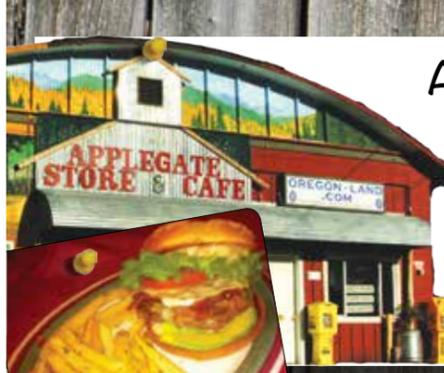
A Chalcedona Checkerspot caterpillar. Photos: Linda Kappen.



The dorsal view of a Chalcedona Checkerspot.



The ventral view of a Chalcedona Checkerspot.



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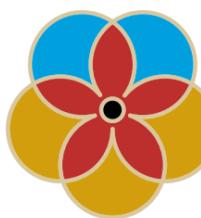
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