

THROUGH THE LEPIDOPTERAN LENS

A stellar year for the Orange Sulphur

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*) is a butterfly of the Pieridae (Whites and Sulphurs) family of butterflies. It is a very common butterfly in North America and Oregon.

Its wingspan can reach two inches plus, and its colors range from yellow to orange or yellow-orange and from greenish to white. The female has a white form called Alba. Males have a solid black border on the dorsal (upperside) of their wings. The females have a broken black border with light colored spots within the border. Both

have central orange patches on the upper side of the wings. A row of spots called eurytheme spots are seen in the marginal area of the ventral (underside) of the wings. The ventral hindwings have a center spot with two concentric rings and a smaller spot above it.

Males patrol for females in any type of habitat. The host plants for the Orange Sulphur are plants of the pea family (*Fabiacae*) and alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*). Females lay eggs singly on the host plants and can lay hundreds of eggs over their

short life span of about 40 days. Larvae will feed at night and in mild climates will overwinter as a late larval stage or a pupal stage. We can experience up to three broods in southern Oregon. In some locations of the US, too many can damage alfalfa crops.

Adults feed on a variety of wildflowers for their nectar source. The habitat for the Orange Sulphur can be alfalfa fields, open areas, roadsides, forest openings, meadows, and many more. This butterfly can be seen in flight from early to late February through late November. In the U.S., it ranges from coast to coast, north to Canada, and south to Mexico.

The Orange Sulphur has had a stellar year in southern Oregon. We recently found this out during a spring survey at

Sampson Creek Preserve, a nearly 4,800-acre preserve east of Ashland managed by Selberg Institute.

Maia Black, the executive director of Selberg Institute, and I recorded 102 Orange Sulphurs on our three transects in June! One transect is upland and two are riparian along Sampson Creek. Imagine all the Orange Sulphurs we didn't see on this expansive preserve! Our reward at the end of the day was observing about 20 Orange Sulphurs puddling on the banks of Sampson Creek.



Linda Kappen

Orange Sulphur butterflies puddling at Sampson Creek Preserve. Photo: Linda Kappen.



Pair of Orange Sulphurs at Crater Lake National Park with white Alba form female on left. Photo: Linda Kappen.



Another special observation was during a butterfly research survey I participated in at Crater Lake National Park. While in the pumice fields, I was able to capture a photo of a mating pair with the female being the white Alba form. A treat for sure at the beautiful Crater Lake National Park!

Linda Kappen
humbugkapps@hotmail.com

Linda Kappen is a southern Oregon naturalist specializing in lepidoptera.



FIELDS

HOME CENTER

5285 WILLIAMS HWY

541.862.2111

FIND EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR FALL









