

THROUGH THE LEPIDOPTERAN LENS

Greenish Blue butterflies are beautiful to observe

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Greenish Blue (*Icaricia saepiolus*) is a butterfly of the Lycaenidae family of butterflies. The wingspan of this blue butterfly reaches up to 1.25 inches.

The male dorsal view is a lively, coolish blue with greenish hints and a black border. The female dorsal view is soft brown with mixed blue and sometimes orange near the hind wing border. Both sexes have black forewing cell bars with borders edged in white fringe. The ventral view of the male is light gray with turquoise-blue scaling at the base near the abdomen. The female ventral view is a very light tan with hints of brownish-gray and sometimes blue at the base. Both sexes have irregular black spots, a row of dashes at the margin, and a row of chevrons at the submarginal with orange patches between the rows. Some variations will occur throughout the Pacific Northwest region.

The Greenish Blue will produce one brood and can be seen in flight from late April to late August. Host plants include various flowering clovers of the Fabaceae family of plants. Males will patrol the host plants close to the ground for females. Females will deposit eggs inside flower buds of clovers or other host plants. The



Dorsal view of a male Greenish Blue with a black border around its wings. Photo: Linda Kappen.

Greenish Blue larvae will eat the flower until halfway through larval stages, hibernate, then resume feeding in spring or early summer.

Wet meadows, grassy moist riparian areas with open fields of clover, and forests

are the habitats for the Greenish Blue. This species of blue does not appear to be attended by ants perhaps due to the moist habitats. (Some species of lycaenids have a symbiotic relationship with ants because the larvae of the butterfly secrete a sweet sticky substance that ants are able to consume without harming the larvae.) The range and distribution are all mountain ranges in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, British Columbia, and from the Olympic Mountains in Washington to the Rockies and southern

Ventral views of a male Greenish Blue butterfly on the left and a female Greenish Blue on the right at Crater Lake National Park. Photo: Linda Kappen.



California. The Greenish Blue is very common inland except for our coastal subspecies, which is imperiled in Oregon.

In my experience, Greenish Blues are not abundant every summer, but when they are present there is a healthy population. For a quiet look and a photograph, they are easy to approach while they are busy puddling or sipping nectar from flowers. Indeed, they are a fun and beautiful blue to observe at high to low elevations.


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Linda Kappen




Female Greenish Blue on a flowering host plant. Photo: Linda Kappen.



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