

SANTA LUCIA
CONSERVANCY

BUTTERFLIES OF THE SANTA LUCIA PRESERVE

Acmon Blue
Icaricia acmon



INSECT INTERACTIONS

About 75% of gossamer-winged butterflies (*Lycaenidae*) have a relationship with ants. In the Acmon Blue's case, it is a **mutualistic relationship**, meaning both species benefit. The ants protect the butterfly's larvae in exchange for the sweet "honeydew" the larvae secrete.



HILLTOPPING ON PEÑON PEAK

Peñon Peak is one of the best sites on The Preserve to observe butterflies in the spring and summer due to a widespread butterfly behavior known as **hilltopping**. **When it's time to mate, males will flutter to and stay at the peak, defending a small territory for days on end by chasing other males off of preferred plants as they await a receptive female to breed with.**

The resulting high concentration and diversity of butterflies at hilltops make such places important research sites for scientists who study butterflies.

Wild Forget-me-not Moth
Gnaphaela latipennis



Monarch
Danaus plexippus



AN EPIC MIGRATION

From late November to December, Monarchs migrate from summer breeding grounds in the Rocky Mountain region to **overwintering** locations on the central coast of California where they find shelter from cold temperatures and storms. **They travel between 50-100 miles per day and complete their journey in about two months.**

Northern White Skipper
Heliopetes ericetorum



PUDDLE PARTIES

Butterflies gather at mud puddles to drink water of course, but there may be another reason for these so called "puddle parties."

As many of the puddle party-goers are male, some entomologists believe that the butterflies are drawn to dissolved minerals like sodium that concentrate at these sites, which they seek to replenish themselves when mating. Some also suggest that the minerals help regulate body temperature.

Pale Swallowtail
Papilio eurymedon



Lorquin's Admiral
Limenitis lorquini



California Sister
Adelpha californica



American Lady
Vanessa virginiensis



Rural Skipper
Ochlodes agricola



RESEARCH EFFORTS

Each year, the Santa Lucia Conservancy participates in the Monterey Butterfly Count. **Researchers take a survey of butterfly species seen at key locations on The Preserve in an effort to detect large scale changes in populations, distribution, and seasonal timing.** Over time, this data may clue us in to potential threats including climate change, pesticide use, invasive plant encroachment, and development.

Common Wood-Nymph
Cercyonis pegala



Western Tiger Swallowtail
Papilio rutulus



Echo Azure
Celastrina echo



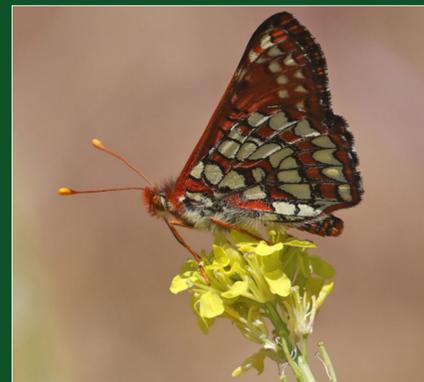
Smith's Blue
Euphilotes enoptes smithi



CRITICAL HABITAT FOR SMITH'S BLUE

The Smith's Blue Butterfly is **endemic** to the central coast of California and was listed as an **engangered species in 1976**. It depends entirely on two species of buckwheat throughout its lifecycle: coast buckwheat and seacliff buckwheat. It emerges when the buckwheat blooms in June and during its one-week lifespan, it sips buckwheat nectar, mates, and lays eggs on the flowers. When the larvae hatch, they feed on the flowers and seeds and transform into pupae, which drop to the ground and overwinter in the leaf litter. On The Preserve, the Santa Lucia Conservancy conducts comprehensive Smith's Blue Butterfly and buckwheat surveys in an effort to locate and conserve suitable habitat for these tiny and elusive butterflies.

Variable Checkerspot
Euphydryas chalcedona



Coronis Fritillary
Speyeria coronis



California Ringlet
Coenonympha tullia californica

