

The Common Checkered Skipper can turn blue!

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Common Checkered Skipper, *Burnsius communis*, formerly known as *Pyrgus communis*, is of the Hesperidae family of butterflies. The taxonomic revision came in the year 2020. Guidebooks and other articles may still show the former *pyrgus* taxonomy for years to come.

The wingspan of this small butterfly is one to one-and-a-half inches. The dorsal view of the wings (see photo) displays a tessellated pattern of white checkered spots and a black background. The ventral view shows bands of olive and tan with black outlines.

The Common Checkered Skipper uses plants in the Mallow family (Malvaceae) as host plants. In mid elevations of mountain ranges, it may use streambank globemallow as a host plant.

The female lays eggs singly on host plants, where the caterpillars live and feed inside folded leaf nests. Up to three generations can occur throughout spring to fall. Fully grown larvae will overwinter.

This butterfly ranges in all of Oregon except in the very far northwest corner of the state. It also occurs in much of the United States and southern Canada.

Common Checkered Skippers like many varieties of habitat and can be found in disturbed spots of our foothills and towns and in open spaces such as pastures, yards, gardens, fields, and forest openings.

They like to nectar on many annual varieties, many wildflowers, and even the flowers of the hostplants.

There is something special about having this butterfly around most of the butterfly season from March to nearly fall. This Skipper has long hairs that refract in the sunlight to make the wings look blue! Seeing this as the butterfly is in flight tricks many adults and children into thinking they are seeing or chasing a *blue* butterfly—until it lands, which is when the black-and-white checkered pattern pops out as it sits with its wings open. An experienced eye still sees the flash of blue as the butterfly quickly skips by.

It is quite amazing to see this butterfly turn blue before your very eyes with the right combination of sunlight, fur, and color!

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Photo, top right: The dorsal (upper side) view of a female Common Checkered Skipper.
 Photo, bottom right: The dorsal view of a male Common Checkered Skipper.
 Photos: Linda Kappen.

Opening up scouting opportunities for girls

BY ERIK JOHNSEN

Hello again, neighbors! I wanted to give you an update on what local scouts are up to. It's certainly been a challenging six months, but we've been trying to meet those challenges with optimism and resilience.

As we all know, some devastating fires ripped through Talent and Phoenix in September, but our local scout groups tried to rise to the occasion.

Scouts BSA Troop 17 in Jacksonville gathered food, clothing, and necessities at the Bigham Knoll Campus and delivered them to the Jacksonville Presbyterian Church, which served as a shelter to displaced families. Cub Scout Pack 17 used its regular meeting to organize school supply kits for displaced families and wrote thank-you cards to first responders.

In October, both groups helped with fall clean-up at the Jacksonville Cemetery, and we participated in the annual Scouting for Food drive in November to help needy families over the holidays. In December, our Cub Scout pack joined up with the Salvation Army to help sort and distribute toys and clothes at their annual Toys for Tots event, which was very rewarding for our youth and a lot of fun!

While the latest COVID lock-down has certainly put a damper on things, we're still finding creative ways to stay active. Our Cub Scout pack hiked the Enchanted Forest Trail in the Applegate in December, followed by an astronomy evening at Ruch Outdoor Community School to view the Jupiter and Saturn convergence. In January, we went sledding at Table Mountain Snow Park, which replaced our annual sledding event with the Crater Lake Council, canceled due to COVID restrictions.

Our latest initiative, which I am most excited to share with you, is that our Scout Troop 17 in Jacksonville will begin accepting girls this February! While the national BSA organization permitted girls to enter the Scouts BSA program a couple of years ago, it is up to each troop to determine if, when, and how they can incorporate girls into their program. Much of this is based on interest and demand, and our Cub Scout Pack 17 is graduating our first group of girls to the troop, so now is our time! To make this an awesome experience for all, we're looking for interested families to come check us out! With scouting, it really is "the more, the merrier!"



In December 2020, Cub Scouts hiked and explored the Enchanted Forest Trail in the Applegate. That evening they attended an astronomy viewing at Ruch Outdoor Community School.
 Photo: Erik Johnsen.

On Sunday, February 21, we held an open house on the Bigham Knoll campus in Jacksonville that was timed to include a live stream from the national BSA organization, which honored the first girls in the nation to earn their Eagle Scout award. We also provided information about scouting and our troop and demonstrations of what we do.

Most girls inquiring about our program seem to be interested in the outdoor activities and wilderness survival aspects of what we do, so we'll be sure to offer some exciting demonstrations about that. We hope you come check us out!

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