

cabbage butterfly *Pieris rapae*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Pieridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

FEATURES

The cabbage butterfly has a wingspan of about one and three-fourths to two and one-fourth inches. Its wings are white on the upper surface with the tip of the forewing black. One or two black spots are also present on the forewing. The underside of the wing has yellow or green-gray at the tip of the forewing and on all of the hindwing. The caterpillar is green with a thin yellow line in the middle of the back and a thin yellow line along each side.

BEHAVIORS

The cabbage butterfly may be found statewide in Illinois. It lives in open, weedy areas where it visits flowers for nectar. It lays its eggs on leaves, buds or stems of the proper food plant species for the larvae, particularly plants of the mustard family. The life cycle includes egg, larva, pupa and adult stages. This butterfly is active from April through September. It overwinters in the pupal stage. This species was introduced to North America about 1860 and was first seen in Illinois in 1875. It is native to Europe and North Africa.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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