

comma butterfly *Polygonia comma*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Nymphalidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The comma butterfly is also known as the hop merchant. Its wingspan is about two to two and one-half inches wide. Short, thick projections can be seen along the edge of the hind wings. The upper side of the forewing has a large, dark spot near the bottom edge, and there are several other dark spots on this wing. The light spots along the hindwing edge are enclosed by a dark border. The hindwing is mostly black. The lower side of the hindwing has a small silver or white comma shape that is enlarged at both ends. The larva may be black, green-brown or white. It has black or white spines.

BEHAVIORS

The comma butterfly may be found statewide in Illinois. It lives in woodlands, where it feeds on nettle, false nettle, hops and elms. The life cycle includes egg, larva, pupa and adult stages. Several broods are produced per year. The adult overwinters. This butterfly is active from May through August.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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