

The butterflies of spring

BY LINDA KAPPEN

Silvery Blue

The Silvery Blue butterfly comes not long after the Spring Azure heralding early spring days. Silvery Blues are on the wing



This pair of Silvery Blue butterflies mating was spotted at the base of the Table Rocks in the spring of 2013.

one and a quarter inches. When their wings are open, they display an iridescent blue. Males have a brilliant blue coloring while females are diffused with gray to brown.

Both have a black border with white fringe. On closed wing, they display an arc of black spots ringed in white. The Silvery Blue is the closest living relative to the extinct Xerces Blue.

An interesting fact about the caterpillars of the Silvery Blue is that they have a structure called the “honey gland,” which secretes a sweet substance that attracts ants that feed on it. The ant tends the caterpillar, protecting it from predators. This is known as a symbiotic relationship in which both

species benefit from one another.

The host plants for the Silvery Blue are some species of lupine, vetch and lotus. They like to nectar on their host plants and flowers of the Asteraceae family. Males will also nectar in puddles.

by March, gracing our woodland openings, meadows, grasslands, watercourses and similar habitats. The Silvery Blue (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus*) is of the butterfly family Lycaenidae. Their wingspan can be up to

Sara Orangetip

The Sara Orangetip is another charming butterfly that ushers in spring. It is unmistakable, bright and beautiful as it flies through forest edges and slopes.

Sara Orangetip (*Anthocaris sara*) is in the butterfly family Pieridae and can be seen in our valleys, foothills, canyons and low to higher mountain areas. They have bright orange-tipped wings edged in black. Closed wings display a greenish-brown marbling with white.

The host plants or the larval food plant for the Sara Orangetip are flower parts of many crucifers and several rock cresses (*Arabis spp.*). They fly about, briefly stopping to nectar on fiddlenecks, mustards, monkeyflowers, rock cress and many other flowers.

The spring of 2013 brought many Sara Orangetips to our area. It is the first spring in a few years that I saw large numbers of them and may be the most I have ever seen. In March of 2013 my son and I hiked through and above the



Sara Orangetips were spotted in abundance along the Enchanted Forest Trail. Photos: Linda Kappen.

Enchanted Forest Trail where the top roads intersect. As we drew closer to the top of the mountain we began to see a flight of many Sara Orangetips. The place was teeming with this delicate beauty. I counted at least 75 Sara Orangetips that day and, as spring went on, saw more at different locations from here to the Klamath/Siskiyou regions. It was exciting, like the forest truly was enchanted.

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Ed. Note: Linda Kappen earned a naturalist certification from Siskiyou Field Institute and hosted a two-day butterfly/moth course there.

Conservation of the elusive black salamander is high priority in the Applegate

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The black salamander is relatively rare in the Siskiyou Mountains. Unlike the restrictive range of the Siskiyou Mountains salamander (*Plethodon stormi*), which is centered mainly around the mountains of the Applegate Valley, the range of the black salamander (*Aneides flavipunctatus*) extends from Sonoma County in California in the south to Jackson and Josephine Counties in Oregon in the north.

There is also a disjunct subspecies (*Aneides flavipunctatus niger*) in the Santa Cruz area; this subspecies is jet black with silver speckles, while the local “black” salamanders are a dark shade of purplish brown with silver speckles or mottling. Experts are currently debating a further separation of the species into four subspecies, with the northwest lineage—including the Siskiyou Mountain population—given its own subspecies.

Currently there are only 17 documented sites of the black salamander in Oregon, 14 of which are found on federal lands, including the Rogue River-

Siskiyou National Forest and the Medford District Bureau of Land Management. Ninety-three percent (or 13) of the known sites found on federal land in Oregon are in the Applegate River watershed, making conservation of this species and its habitat in the Applegate area a high priority.

Throughout its range the black salamander occupies low-elevation, mixed conifer forests, woodlands, grasslands, meadows, and forested riparian sites. In our area the species seems most abundant in mature or old-growth forests although, especially in interior locations such as in the Applegate, the species is also often associated with intermittent streams, springs, or seeps. The black salamander may be found living in mossy talus habitat beneath a forest canopy.

Susceptible to changes

Like our endemic Siskiyou Mountains salamander, the black salamander is lungless and breathes through its skin, making it very susceptible to changes in microclimate and forest canopy conditions. The mossy

talus conditions allow these lungless salamander species to burrow deep in the rocky slopes beneath a canopy of old trees to survive the hot, dry summer season.

Threats to the black salamander in Oregon appear to be mostly associated with timber harvest due to the associated changes in microclimate, ground disturbance, and canopy cover. In California the species appears to be impacted by habitat conversion from grassland, woodland, mixed hardwood, and mixed conifer forests to vineyards or other forms of agriculture. Other impacts include habitat fragmentation, rock quarry development, climate change, uncharacteristic fire, and exposure to chemicals such as herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and fire retardants.

Little known and understood

Although relatively little known and little understood, the black salamander, at the northern edge of its range in the Siskiyou Mountains, is an important portion of the region’s biodiversity. The

Siskiyou Mountains represent a unique habitat for salamander species, where species often reach either the northern or southern extension of their range. The diversity of habitats and the distinctive blending of habitats allow many species of plants and animals to exist within the Siskiyou Mountains at the margin of their prevailing ranges.

For millennia the Siskiyou Mountains have been a refuge during periods of extreme climatic conditions. With global warming on the horizon these mountains may once again shelter a wide variety of species in their diverse microclimates. The protection of wildland habitats and the maintenance of biodiversity in the region will allow the Siskiyou Mountains to continue providing such habitat into an uncertain future.

Luke Ruediger

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Meet Valorie Tintinger, the Gater’s advertising representative for Jackson County

The *Applegater* Team welcomes Valorie Tintinger, who moved from California to Oregon in December 2007, first to the little bedroom community of Rogue River, then two years ago to the Applegate Valley. She says she likes the Applegate so much more because of all the wonderful people she has met.

Says Valorie, “This is a really great place to be for the second part of our lives. I have two wonderful daughters and four fantastic grandkids (three boys and a girl). I also run two home businesses, and enjoy volunteering in the community anytime I can, like for Ruch Library, or helping to transport cats for RiverSong Sanctuary in Williams.

“The newspaper job is new to me, but I enjoy learning what it takes for a small-town paper to happen. I am here for your



needs in advertising! I have a goal to help bring more people to enjoy this paper, to keep reading and sharing it. I look forward to seeing you in the future.”

You can reach Valorie at 541-450-2983 or livingwelltoday526@gmail.com.



This black salamander was discovered in early December 2013 on the author’s property in the Applegate watershed.