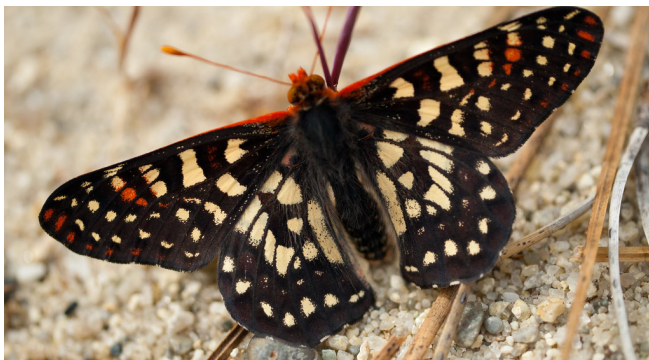


# Back to Roots BC

Supporting Pollinator Populations in British Columbia by Promoting the Use and Popularity of Native Plants



The Propertius Duskywing is a butterfly species that depends on Garry Oaks. Their larvae feed exclusively on oak leaves and their pupae are found in the litter below. Citizens with Garry Oaks on their property can aid the species by leaving the litter unranked. Photo credit to S. Rae, <https://www.flickr.com/people/35142635@N05/>



The Chalcedon Checkerspot butterfly has not been seen on Vancouver Island since the early 1900's, and is just one of many rare butterflies that once inhabited the island. Photo credit to Tyler Karaszewski, <https://www.flickr.com/people/tylerkaraszewski/>

## Habitat Loss Poses a Serious Threat

One of the largest obstacles these these populations face is habitat loss and degradation. The open, lowland areas where butterflies typically live have been rapidly developed in recent decades. This development, coupled with the spread of competitive invasive plants, has lead to a shortage in the number of vital native plants many species need to survive.

One specific invasive species that has harmed butterfly populations is Scotch Broom. The flowering shrub has taken over many meadows in the Vancouver Island region, and has subsequently decreased the quality and quantity of suitable butterfly habitat.

## Butterfly Populations Are In Decline

It is no secret that pollinator populations have faced significant threats in recent decades. Although honey bee and monarch butterfly population decline has received notable attention in recent years, the reality is that most pollinator populations face many of the same obstacles.

For example, Vancouver Island has historically been home to 64 different species and subspecies of butterflies. However, studies done as early as 1994 have shown at least 10 of those species were either in serious jeopardy or extinct. Another 2010 survey performed by the City of Victoria determined that nearly 50% of butterflies living in city parks were invasive to Victoria Island

## Butterfly Basics

Most butterfly species have specific plants that provide nectar for adults or food for their larvae. The larvae of many species are so specified that they will not eat at all without their particular food plant present. Because of this, the presence of specific native plants is vital to the reproductive cycle for many butterfly species.

During times of environmental stress, smaller populations of butterflies can die off in areas with low quality habitat. Alternatively, during years of plenty, butterflies spread out from healthier populations in order to colonize vacant areas.

Because of this, the creation of more butterfly habitat on Vancouver Island could enable certain butterfly species to recolonize the lands they once inhabited