

## Linnaeus' "Top" Butterfly Species

High resolution images are available from Kate Longhurst: [kate@linnean.org](mailto:kate@linnean.org)



The American Monarch (*Danaus plexippus* L.) Perhaps the best known butterfly in the world, the remarkable annual migration of almost countless millions of Monarchs have inspired wonder and awe, as well as bringing innumerable new insights into the ecology and physiology of this remarkable insect.

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The Large White (*Pieris brassicae* L.) Bane of the cabbage grower, this species is useful for all manner of biochemical, physiological, ecological and behavioural investigations.

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The Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui* L.) One of the most beautiful of the common butterflies, this species is intriguing because of its incredible geographic range and remarkable ability to disperse.

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The Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi* L.) A master of camouflage, studies of the colouration of this species have contributed to an explosion of interest in the biophysics of photonic structures.

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The Paris Peacock (*Papilio paris* L.) is one of the most stunningly beautiful of all the butterflies and gives a perfect example of how the colour patterns of butterflies are built up from individual scales.

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## Butterflies from the Linnaean Collection

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Brimstone Butterfly (*Papilio rhamni* L.) Commonly known as the Brimstone because of its sulphur yellow wings, Linnaeus named this butterfly *rhamni* because the caterpillars feed primarily on buckthorn (genus *Rhamnus*). This species may be the origin of the English word butterfly, as the “the butter-coloured fly of spring”.

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Peacock Butterfly (*Papilio io* L.) These butterflies get their common name from the beautiful spots on their wings which resemble the tail of a peacock. The caterpillar is often found in early spring feeding on buddleia.

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Menelaus Blue Morpho (*Papilio menelaus* L.) One of the famous South American blue “morpho” butterflies, Linnaeus named it *Papilio Menelaus* - after the mythological king of Sparta, one of the warriors that hid inside the Trojan Horse. *M. menelaus* occurs widely in South America, but was first obtained by 18<sup>th</sup> century collectors from Surinam.

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The Chinese Yellow Swallowtail (*Papilio xuthus* L.) Linnaeus often drew on Greek mythology for the species names of his butterflies. Xuthus was a son of Hellen and his wife Orseis. This butterfly, is native to northern Burma, southern China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan, and is also found on Hawaii. The larvae normally feed on Rutaceae (plants of the citrus family).

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Blue Mountain Butterfly (*Papilio ulysses* L.) Linnaeus named this butterfly after the mythological Greek figure Odysseus (Ulysses, in Latin). This butterfly is a Rutaceae-feeding swallowtail that occurs widely in the Papuan region, including parts of Queensland. During the 18th century collectors first obtained this species from Ambon, one of the Spice Islands (Indonesia).

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The golden clearwing (*Haetera piera* L.) This butterfly belongs to a purely Latin American subgroup of the Satyr butterflies. Named *Papilio piera* by Linnaeus, Piera is a feminine name derived from the same classical root as Peter (rock). Specimens examined by Linnaeus came from Surinam.

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Carl Linnaeus (1707 - 1778)

The Linnean Society of London, founded in 1788, takes its name from the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus, whose botanical and zoological collections and library have been in the Society's keeping since 1829, having been purchased from the executor of the Society's first President, Sir James Edward Smith.

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