

Common Buckeye, *Junonia coenia* Hübner (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) ¹

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Introduction

Named for its conspicuous target-shaped eyespots, the common buckeye, *Junonia coenia* Hübner, is one of the most distinctive and readily-identifiable North American butterflies. It inhabits a wide variety of open, sunny landscapes including old fields, roadsides, utility corridors, gardens, parks, yards, fallow agricultural land, scrubs, pine savannas, and weedlots.

Distribution

The common buckeye is a resident across the southern United States and much of Mexico. In Florida, it can be found in all 67 counties. The butterfly regularly expands its range northward each year to temporarily colonize much of the U.S., occasionally reaching southern Canada. Starting in late summer and continuing through fall, huge numbers of adults migrate southward into peninsular Florida. Adults overwinter.

Description

Adult: The common buckeye is a medium-sized butterfly with several large, conspicuous round eyespots. Adults have a wingspan range of 45 to 70 mm. Females are generally larger than males and have more rounded forewings. The upper surface of the forewing has a broad white postmedian band that touches and often encircles a single large eyespot. The forewing cell has two prominent orange bars. The upper surface of the hindwing has two large eyespots and a broad orange submarginal band. The undersides of the hindwings are seasonally variable. Individuals produced in the wet season (summer) have tan to brown ventral hindwings with more noticeable pattern elements. Individuals produced in the dry season (winter) are a rich reddish-brown.

Larva: The mature larva is black with numerous blue-black branched spines.

Pupa: The pupa is mottled brown and cream.

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Figure 1. Adult common buckeye butterfly, *Junonia coenia* Hübner Credits: Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida



Figure 2. Mature larvae of the common buckeye butterfly, *Junonia coenia* Hübner, on false foxglove, *Agalinis* sp. (Orobanchaceae). Credits: Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida

Life Cycle

The common buckeye produces multiple generations each year. Adults may be found in all months of the year throughout much of Florida. Adults have a quick, erratic flight low to the ground and are quite wary of close approach. Both sexes (particularly males) perch on low vegetation or bare earth. Females lay the small green eggs singly on leaves of the host plant.

Hosts

The larvae utilize a variety of herbaceous plants including: turkey tangle fogfruit, *Phyla nodiflora* L. (Verbenaceae); toadflax, *Linaria* spp. (Veronicaceae); plantain, *Plantago* spp. (Plantaginaceae); twinflower, *Dyschoriste* spp. (Acanthaceae); false foxglove, *Agalinis* spp. (Orobanchaceae); and American bluehearts, *Buchnera americana* L. (Orobanchaceae).

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