Common name: **Great spangled fritillary** Genus Species: ***Speyeria cybele***

Photo credit: David Cappaert, Bugwood.org

Description: Like most greater fritillaries, great spangled fritillaries are recognized by their large size, silvery spots beneath, and orange and brown spotted upper wings, with the coloration becoming noticeably darker toward the body. Great spangled fritillaries have a wingspread of about 2.2 to over 3 inches.

Habitats: The great spangled fritillary occurs in a variety of habitats such as meadows, stream sides, roadsides, power line cuts, fields, pastures, prairies, and marshes, usually near forest.

Phenology highlights: Adult greater fritillaries are among the longest lived non-hibernating butterflies in the United States. Southern females that emerge in June can live well into October.

Species facts

- Great spangled fritillaries pollinate many species of plants, both native and non-native, as they visit flowers for nectar throughout their long lives.
- Their caterpillars, like those of many other species, are very selective about what they eat and require violets for food once they emerge in the spring.
- Eggs are laid on or near violets, usually after the hottest time of the summer.
- Great spangled fritillaries have one generation annually, unlike monarchs which have several each year.

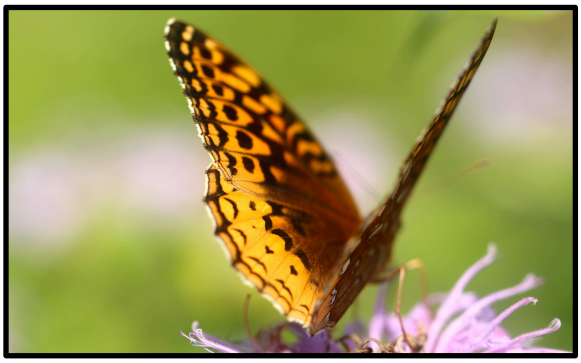

Photo credit: Kerissa Battle

Distribution: Across southern Canada and the northern two thirds of the United States from coast to coast, southward to northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, northern New Mexico, and eastern California

Why observe this species? Greater fritillaries are among the most spectacular and conspicuous resident summer butterflies in much of the United States. Several species of greater fritillaries, including the great spangled, declined to varying extents in the 20th century, and these butterflies may prove to be useful indicators of habitat quality. Greater fritillaries are also likely to be adversely affected by climate change in warmer parts of their ranges, but they might eventually expand northward in Canada.

Tip for observing this species: Identification of this species can be difficult. A regional butterfly guide may help to confirm identification.

For more information about phenology and the New York Phenology Project (NYPP), please visit the NYPP website (www.nyphenologyproject.org) and the USA-NPN website (www.usanpn.org).

Great spangled fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*)

Note: Even if you did not see a particular animal species, record that data. Knowing when an animal is not present or when an animal is not in a given phenophase is just as important as knowing when it is.

Active Adults

One or more adults are seen moving about or at rest.

Flower visitation

One or more individuals are seen visiting flowers or flying from flower to flower. If possible, record the name of the plant or describe it in the comments field.

Photos needed! Help fill in the empty photo boxes on this species profile. Contact New York Phenology Project (nyphenologyproject.org) to submit photos. Thank you!

Mating

A male and female are seen coupled in a mating position, usually end to end. This can occur at rest or in flight.

Active caterpillars

One or more caterpillars (larvae) are seen moving about or at rest. When seen on a plant, if possible, record the name of the plant or describe it in the comments field.

Caterpillars feeding

One or more caterpillars are seen feeding. If possible, record the name of the plant or substance being eaten or describe it in the comments field.

Individuals at a feeding station

One or more individuals are seen visiting a feeder, feeding station, or food placed by a person.

Food for Adults

Adult great spangled fritillaries drink nectar of many native flowers, such as mints, butterfly weed, common milkweed, and Joe-pye-weed; they also visit non-natives such as lilacs. They tend to prefer long tubular flowers.

Food for Caterpillars

Great spangled fritillary caterpillars hatch in fall and sleep through winter, awakening in spring at the same time as violet plants usually begin to grow. The timing is important to the hungry caterpillar as they will only eat violet plants.

Phenophases not pictured: ***'dead adults', 'dead caterpillars',*** *and* ***'individuals in a net'***