

Tim Herd's

# Watchable Wildlife Guide

wildlife observation in the right place at the right time

Week of June 17-23, 2007

## *Fritillary flight*



Possessing forelegs that are not much more than pollen brushes, the large family of brush-footed butterflies includes the creatively named subfamilies of admirals, anglewings, checkers, crescents, ladies and fritillaries – whose tawny wings have black or silvery spots.

The great spangled fritillary is the largest of its clan, with wings of tan to orange with black on the forewing veins. Its flight time – and the best time to see them – is from May through September as the males patrol open areas in search of the darker females. By late summer, she selects a microhabitat that includes violets in which to deposit the eggs from her only brood. Although they hatch in just a few weeks, the larvae do not feed before overwintering in the ground. Come next spring, the velvety-black caterpillars with six rows of red-orange and black spines feed at night on tender violet leaves before they pupate and the lifecycle continues.

The attractively colored and patterned adults are sustained on the nectar of many wildflowers and can be observed flitting between milkweeds, thistles, joe-pye weed, vetch, bergamot, dogbane, ironweed, red clover and purple coneflowers.

### WHERE TO OBSERVE

Rocky Mountain National Park, Colo.  
Sharon Audubon Center, Conn.  
Illinois State Beach Park, Ill.  
Bluestem Prairie Natural Area, Minn.  
Great Basin National Park, Nev.  
Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge, N.J.  
Swartswood State Park, N.J.  
Falls Lake Recreation Area, N.C.  
Little Missouri National Grassland, N.D.  
Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, Okla.  
Blue Mounds State Park, Wis.  
Grand Tetons National Park, Wyo.

### LOOK FOR

*wings above:* orange-brown with many black spots  
*forewings below:* paler with brownish markings and silvery spots  
*hindwings below:* darker with tawny band separating two outermost rows of silver spots  
black caterpillar with six rows of branching red-orange and black spines

### Great spangled fritillary

3-3½ inches

*Speyeria cybele*

**Habitat:** moist fields, prairies, open woodlands

