

zebra *Heliconius charithonia*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Nymphalidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The zebra butterfly has a wingspan of about two and three-fourths to four inches. Its wings are black with yellow stripes, and the forewings are long and narrow. The hindwings have a row of yellow spots, too. The larva is white with bands of red and black and a yellow head.

BEHAVIORS

The zebra butterfly is a rare stray into the southern one-half of Illinois. Its larva eats passion-flower plants that contain a distasteful poison. After the transformation in the pupa stage, the poison is retained in the body of the adult. The pupa stage wriggles when disturbed and makes a noise. The adult lives in densely wooded areas. Adults roost in groups, returning to the same roost each night.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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