

What is the largest butterfly in Foothills Park?

At any given moment in time it would be hard to tell; you may be comparing a small Monarch with a large California Sister with a medium sized Ceanothus Silk Moth or the other way around. I can come up with a list of seven candidates (actually 6 butterflies and one moth).

Butterflies first (from about largest to about smallest):

The Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), one of the most recognizable butterflies being bright orange with black markings, has wingspans from 3 3/8 inches to 4 7/8 inches.

The Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*), with yellow with black markings and small tails on its lower wings, has wingspans of 2 3/4 inches to 4 inches.

The Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*), with light yellow with black markings and small tails on its lower wings, has wingspans of 2 3/4 inches to 3 1/2 inches.

The Anise Swallowtail (*Papilio zelicaon*), with yellow with black markings, an orange-ish spot on the rear wings and small tails on its lower wings, has wingspans of 2 3/4 inches to 3 1/2 inches.

The Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*), with yellow borders on dark wings and small blue spots along the border, has wingspans from 2 1/4 inches to 4 inches.

The California Sister (*Adelpha bredowii*), with dark wings with an orange spot near the tip of the forewings and white bars running to the hindwings, has wingspans from 2 1/4 inches to 4 inches.

Our moth candidate is the Ceanothus Silk Moth (*Hyalophora euryalus*), mostly cinnamon to brown with white spots on its forewings and white crescents on its hind wings, has wingspans from 3 1/2 to 5 inches.

I have only positively seen the last two on this list in Foothills Park. The two silk moths that I have seen were larger than any of the California Sisters I have seen (over a dozen).

The butterflies on this list were taken from a study done by Jerome Pellet, a student at Stanford University.

The largest butterfly in the world is the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing from New Guinea with a wingspan of a foot or so (don't eat it, it is poisonous); the smallest butterfly in the world is the Western Pygmy Blue from Africa which has a wingspan of under a half inch.