

A Guide to Dorsal Views of Northeastern *Polygonia* (Anglewing) Species

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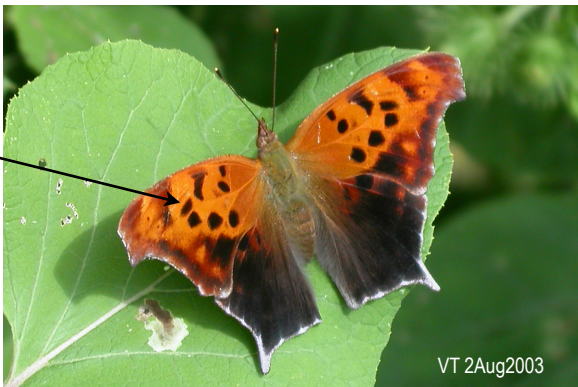
Fall/Spring Brood

Summer Brood



Question Mark (*Polygonia interrogationis*)

- Dark rectangle toward apex of forewing
- Forewing more strongly hooked than other anglewings; hindwing more “tailed”
- Wings margins relatively smooth and silver-edged
- Fall/Spring brood uniformly orange. Summer brood shows darkened hindwings and dark margins on forewings



Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*)

- On mid forewing spot row, the **inner spot (nearest body) stands alone**, not paired with another spot (or paired with faint spot)
- Wing margins tend to be less ragged than other commas
- Three dark spots on hindwing; hard to see inner trailing spot in summer form
- Fall/Spring brood more uniformly orange. Summer brood shows darkened hindwings



Gray Comma (*Polygonia progne*)

- The “**cleanest**” and **least-spotted** of our commas
- Mid **forewing spot row clean and distinct**, with middle spot usually larger than the other two.
- Fall/Spring brood (may be more common than summer brood) uniformly orange, with **two dark spots on fairly clean hindwing**.
- Summer brood’s darker hindwing, similar to fall/spring, encloses row of distinct submarginal yellow spots (like other commas except for Satyr Coma)



Green Comma (*Polygonia faunus*)

- Distinct jagged wing margins (but not always), perhaps more jagged than in this image. Generally appears deeper orange with darker black markings compared to other commas (particularly Eastern Comma); Green Comma sometimes shows **yellowish submarginal lunules on hindwing** and yellowish forewing apex contrasting with orange ground color. Summer form shows darker wing margins than the image shown here, particularly on hindwing.
- On mid forewing spot row, **the inner spot (nearest body) is often paired with another spot**, which you’ll find in Eastern Comma but not in Gray Comma.
- Often shows **three dark spots on hindwing**. Darkened hindwing border encloses row of distinct orange or yellow spots (like other commas except for Satyr Comma, which shows a yellow ground color in this subterminal region).



Hoary Comma (*Polygonia gracilis*)

- Dorsally, probably appears more like a dirty Gray Comma than anything else, with bigger “messier” spots on the forewing and hindwing (not as “pert” as in Gray Comma).
- On mid forewing spot row, **the inner spot most often not paired with another spot** (or paired with faint spot)
- Often shows two dark spots on hindwing, **lacking the third central spot of Green and Satyr commas**. Thick darkened hindwing border encloses row of distinct orange spots (like other commas except for Satyr Comma)



Satyr Comma (*Polygonia satyrus*) - rare in the East

- Resembles a jagged-edged fall/spring Eastern Comma with a distinctly paired inner forewing spot. Tends to have **more golden ground color**
- Shows third hindwing spot and generally paler hindwing borders (like a fall/spring Eastern Comma) and therefore **lacking distinct enclosed row of orange spots**



References:

- *Butterflies of the East Coast* by Rick Cech and Guy Tudor
- *The Butterflies of North America* by James A. Scott
- *Butterflies of North America* by Jim P. Brock and Kenn Kaufman
- *A Swift Guide to Butterflies of North America* by Jeffrey Glassberg
- *Butterflies through Binoculars (The East)* by Jeffrey Glassberg
- Review and advice: Sue Cloutier, Daniel Bogar

Notes and Caveats:

Few of these marks, particularly the dark wing spots, are diagnostic. Use a combination of marks. In the Northeast, Question Mark and Eastern Comma are the most common anglewings; Gray Comma and Green Comma are next, probably varying from year to year in relative abundance. Hoary Comma and Satyr Comma are rare in the Northeast.

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