

Eastern Comma

Eastern Commas are widespread in Alabama. They are not extremely common, but seem to occur more frequently in the upper two-thirds of the state. Eastern Commas spend the winter as adult butterflies; sightings could occur throughout the year. Flight is strong and rapid. They are typically found near deciduous trees, including those in suburban years. They often gather in puddle clubs and seldom nectar from flowers, preferring sap, carrion, dung, etc. For some reason, they tend to be much less common than their close relative, Question Mark.



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- Seasonally dimorphic. The summer (wet season) form has more black on hindwings. Winter (dry season) butterflies display more orange.
- Sexually dimorphic. Differences are subtle. Males are smaller, have more strongly hooked forewings, and stronger contrast in dorsal wing pattern than females.
- Ventral wing color and pattern is highly variable and does not appear to correlate with season or gender. Base color may range from gray to reddish-brown. May be highly patterned or virtually solid.
- May be confused with Question Marks. Eastern Commas are slightly smaller, have shorter tails, and forewings that are less hooked. They lack the fourth dorsal forewing spot/dash that is present on Question Marks. Ventral hindwing has a single marking that looks like a comma.





Eastern Comma

Dorsal View

Summer (Wet Season) Form

Forewing slightly hooked

*Row of three black spots

Hindwing mostly black

Stubby tail

Eastern Comma *Polygonia comma*

© Vitally Charny

*Reliable diagnostic marker

Wingspan: 1¾-2½ inches (4.5-6.4 cm)

Alabama Butterfly Atlas | alabama.butterflyatlas.org



Eastern Comma

Dorsal View

Winter (Dry Season) Form

Forewing slightly hooked

*Row of three black spots

Submarginal row of yellow spots

Lavender edge

Stubby tail

Eastern Comma *Polygonia coamma*

© W. Mike Howell

*Reliable diagnostic marker

Wingspan: 1¾-2½ inches (4.5-6.4 cm)



Eastern Comma

Ventral View

Forewing hooked

Jagged wing edges

*Pearly-white comma

Short tail

Eastern Comma *Polygonia comma*

© Sara Bright

*Reliable diagnostic marker

Wingspan: 1¾-2½ inches (4.5-6.4 cm)

Similar Species

Eastern Comma



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Question Mark



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