

Coenonympha californica insulana

English name common ringlet, subspecies *insulana*

Scientific name *Coenonympha californica insulana*

Family Nymphalidae (Brushfoots), subfamily Satyrinae (Satyrs)

Other English names Vancouver ringlet, island ochre ringlet

Other scientific names *Coenonympha tullia insulana*

Risk status

BC: imperilled (S2); red-listed

Canada: COSEWIC: not assessed

Global: vulnerable (G5T3T4)

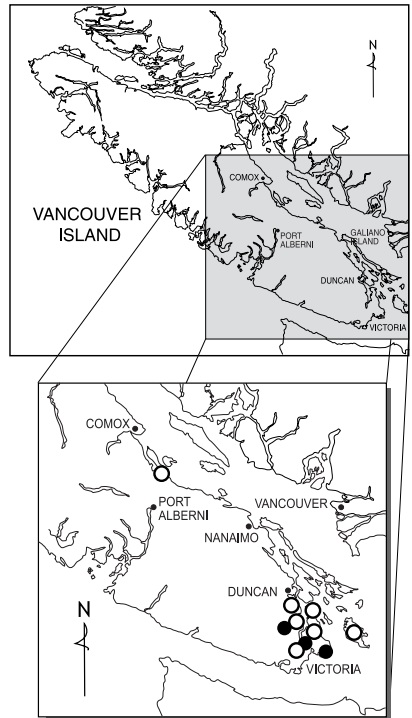
Elsewhere: Oregon – unranked (S?); Washington – unranked (S?), state monitoring as species of concern

Range/Known distribution

Common ringlets (subspecies *insulana*) may be found in suitable habitats in the Pacific Northwest from southwestern British Columbia to Oregon, including the San Juan Islands and Puget Trough in Washington and the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

In Canada, the subspecies is found only on Vancouver Island. Populations were originally found only in the Greater Victoria area, predominantly on the Saanich Peninsula, but these butterflies apparently moved northwards as roads and development spread, providing new habitat for caterpillars.

In the 1950s this subspecies was one of the most abundant butterflies on Vancouver Island, but it is now rare.



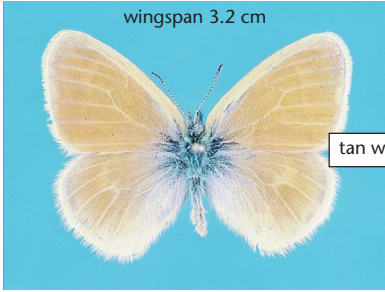
**Distribution of
*Coenonympha californica insulana***

● recently confirmed sites

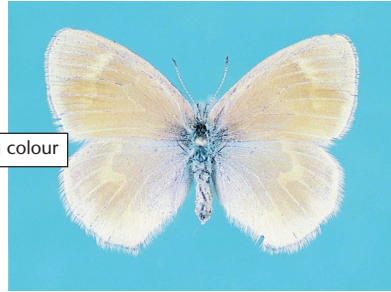
○ known historical sites

Coenonympha californica insulana

Male, dorsal view
wingspan 3.2 cm



Female, dorsal view



tan wing colour

Male, ventral view



James Miskelly

Coenonympha californica insulana

All photos: Crispin Guppy excepted as noted

Field Description

Ringlets are small butterflies with a characteristic bouncing flight pattern. The *insulana* subspecies of the common ringlet is an **orange-brown to tan colour**.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

No other subspecies of the common ringlet are found on Vancouver Island or the Gulf Islands, and **no other butterflies in the area look similar**.

Immature stages: Eggs are white to greenish yellow, with brown flecks and streaks. Newly hatched larvae (caterpillars) are pale, flesh-coloured or yellow-green, with mid-dorsal reddish line and three similar lines on each side. Mature larvae have green heads, with white mushroom-like projections on their bodies. Pupae are grass-green, short, broad and smooth.

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Life History

Common ringlets have two generations per year. First-brood adults fly from May to early July, and the second brood flies from August to October.

First brood adults lay their eggs in May on native grasses. Some of these eggs produce rapidly-growing larvae that pupate about eight weeks after hatching, maturing as a second brood of adults from August to September. Other first-brood larvae grow slowly, hibernating as mature larvae and becoming first-brood adults the following year.

The second-brood adults lay eggs in the fall. The resulting larvae hibernate, eventually developing into more second-brood adults the following fall.

Habitat

Butterfly and skipper populations are very closely linked to the availability of larval and adult foodplants. Common ringlet larvae require green native grasses as food and may also feed on sedges. Suitable habitats include open areas with short grass, in locations that have sufficient moisture for the vegetation to stay green throughout the dry summer (to provide suitable habitat for the second-brood larvae) without being subject to flooding in winter.

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Why the species is at risk

Populations of common ringlets (*insulana* subspecies) are declining as their food sources disappear. Damp grassy areas, once common as people cleared land for agriculture, are becoming overgrown with shrubs and trees and destroyed by urbanisation. These moist areas are especially vulnerable to invasion by non-native grasses and shrubs such as Scotch broom* (*Cytisus scoparius*) that are replacing the native grasses.

What you can do to help this species

Management practices should be tailored to the needs of this species and its habitat. Potential management tools will depend on the specific circumstances and may require experimentation prior to implementation.

Before taking any action, expert advice should be obtained, and no action taken without it. Please refer to the introductory section of this manual.

Protection of suitable habitat and food sources may help to reduce the decline of this species. Removal of invasive shrubs such as Scotch broom* and the reintroduction of native grasses will help this butterfly as well as many other native species that depend on similar habitats.

If you see this species, DO NOT CAPTURE it, but take clear photographs if possible and record other pertinent information. Detailed information should be given to the Conservation Data Centre in Victoria (srnwww.gov.bc.ca/cdc).

References

Guppy, C.S. and J.H. Shepard. 2001. *Butterflies of British Columbia*. UBC Press, Vancouver, British Columbia in collaboration with the Royal British Columbia Museum.

For further information, contact the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, or see the web site at: www.goert.ca.

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*Refers to non-native species.