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**Sent:** Monday, March 21, 2011 5:55 PM  
**To:** VA Master Naturalist Northern Neck Chapter  
**Subject:** Falcate Orangetip Butterfly



Today I was puttering around in my greenhouse, and noticed several small white butterflies flitting about. Taking a closer look, I noticed the brilliant orange tips of the wings. I'd never seen one like this and this prompted getting out the camera and taking a few pictures, as well as looking it up in Art Evans' Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North America.

It turns out to be a Falcate Orangetip, a member of the Pieridae, the Whites and Sulphur Butterflies. It is the only Orangetip found in eastern North America. Adults fly during the spring in deciduous forests and mixed oak-pine woods and along stream courses, which is exactly where I found it. The wings are white, about 3.5 to 4.5 cm long. On the upper side of the male's forewing is an eye-catching orange spot, but females lack this. Both have a round black spot located in the upper wing. The underside of the hindwing usually has intricate green-marbling.

Males flit around all day seeking females. Females lay their eggs singly on host plant flowers of the mustard family in as Arabis, Barbarea, Cardamine, and Dentaria. The eggs are yellow-green but redden before hatching. The larvae feed mainly at night and prefer to eat flowers, flower buds, and seed pods rather than leaves. Larger larvae may eat smaller larvae that may be feeding on the same plant. The caterpillar is green with blue, green, and yellow crossbands, white side stripe and orange back stripe. --

There is a white stripe that runs along the side of the body. It can grow up to 3 centimeters long. Pupation occurs in mid June. The chrysalis is yellowish in color and covered with black spots. A spike-like projection on the head provides camouflage as it makes it look like a thorn. The chrysalis may overwinter for two or more years. It has 1 brood per year.

Its always fun to learn something new in the world of nature!

---Ellis Squires

The **Virginia Master Naturalist Program** is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. Interested Virginians become Master Naturalists through training and volunteer service.