

Butterfly Watching

Some materials and equipment to aid in your search and identification of butterflies include:

- A field guide
- A good set of binoculars with close focus
- A butterfly net for catch and release
- Hand lens (up to 10x)
- Bug boxes or transparent jars with air holes
- A topographic map of the area.

How to Hold Butterflies for Identification

- Gently grip (do not squeeze) opposite sides of the thorax with your thumb and forefinger.

OR

- Hold the leading edge of both forewings between your thumb and forefinger.
Holding butterflies in this way will not harm them, and their scales will remain relatively intact.

Remember to be gentle!

Do You Know that . . .

- Some species of butterflies migrate for hundreds or thousands of kilometres.
- Butterflies smell with their antennae.
- Butterflies taste with their feet.
- Butterflies see colour and are sensitive to the ultra-violet range of light.
- "Hilltopping" is when butterflies fly to the top of a hill to use it as a lookout, or to meet and mate.
- "Mud puddling" is done by Blues, Swallowtails, Skippers, Sulphurs, and some Brush-footed butterflies. They huddle in groups on mud puddles to drink, and to take up salts.
- Adult butterfly foods include flower nectar, sap, rotting fruit, aphid honeydew, feces, pollen, and carrion.

Butterfly Life Cycle

Complete Metamorphosis

When we think of butterflies, we usually think of their adult stage, but these insects have four life stages:

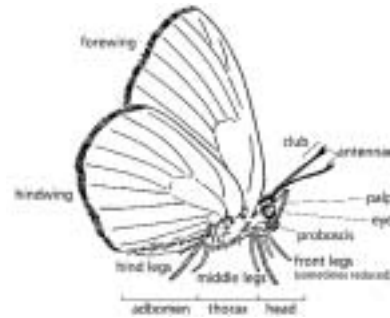
EGG ⇒ **LARVA** ⇒ **PUPA** ⇒ **ADULT**

Eggs are usually too small to be noticed easily. Some eggs are laid in patterned clusters, others are laid singly.

Larvae are herbivores and eat plant leaves. Butterfly larvae are often called caterpillars.

Pupae of butterflies, unlike most moth pupae, are not covered with silk. At this stage of metamorphosis the larva rearranges its tissues to become an adult. A butterfly pupa is often called a chrysalis.

Adult male butterflies are usually more colourful than females. Different species of butterflies overwinter in any one of these four stages.



after J. Acorn

"Secret" Spots that Butterflies Love

Bogs	Gardens	Parks
Cemeteries	Gravel pits	Pastures
Clearings	Hilltops	River bars
Creeks	Marshes	Roadsides
Ditches	Meadows	Shorelines
Farm yards	Mud puddles	Thicket edges
Fields	Open woods	

#1 Spot: A Flowering Meadow!
Butterflies like warm, sunny days.

References and Field Guides

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Atlantis Fritillary – ventral view of wings



Canadian Tiger Swallowtail – dorsal view

Butterflies of the Athabasca Region

Butterflies of the Athabasca Region is a guide to common butterfly species found within a 50-kilometre radius of the Town of Athabasca. The butterflies are listed by their common names and are grouped by their scientific families. This checklist is based on three years of butterfly counts in the Athabasca region as well as literature records. There are nearly 60 species of butterflies in this area.

Produced by Science Outreach—Athabasca and Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Athabasca.
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Financial support provided by an Alberta Community Lottery Board Grant, 2002.