



The Birth of the Butterflies

The butterflies get all their living from the flowers. You often think they are resting, but they are really getting their food, too,—sipping honey from thousands of blossoms.

But they did not always do this. Once they could not fly at all, and wore very dark coats, and crawled on the ground.

After a while their coats burst open, all down the back, and they came out in dresses of quaker gray. Then these poor, creeping things went to work and spun little silken cords, strong enough to hold them, and swung off from the under part of some leaf into the air; there they swung for more than a week, rocked to and fro by the wind, just as if they were going to sleep. Then a sudden crack in the light gray coat aroused them, and they began to get their sleepy eyes open, and look about. Such beautiful golden wings as they saw, all bordered with black and yellow, and covered all over with the tiniest feathers, only you could not see them with your naked eye.

In a very short time the sun and the gentle winds dried up these beautiful wings and taught them how to use them. Off they went, over the tallest trees, to join the rest of the family, who had been transformed just as wonderfully as they were!

How could they believe their senses when they found that all this beauty really belonged to them? The transformation from a worm-like creature into the splendor of a butterfly is one of nature's greatest wonders.

People sometimes confuse butterflies and moths, but they are two different types of insects. Butterflies are usually lighter in the body than Moths, from which insects they are easily distinguished by the shape of the antennæ, which in the Butterflies are slender and terminate in a small knob, but in the Moths terminate in a point, and are often beautifully fringed.

This story contains the unaltered and unabridged text of and illustration from "Birth of the Butterflies" from *Mother Bedtime Stories*, published in 1909 by Henry Altemus Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; with additional modified text and illustration from *Wood's Illustrated Natural History* by Reverend J. G. Wood published in 1897 by Henry Altemus Company; with additional new text by Dan C. Rinnert. Copyright 2004 by Canville Communications.

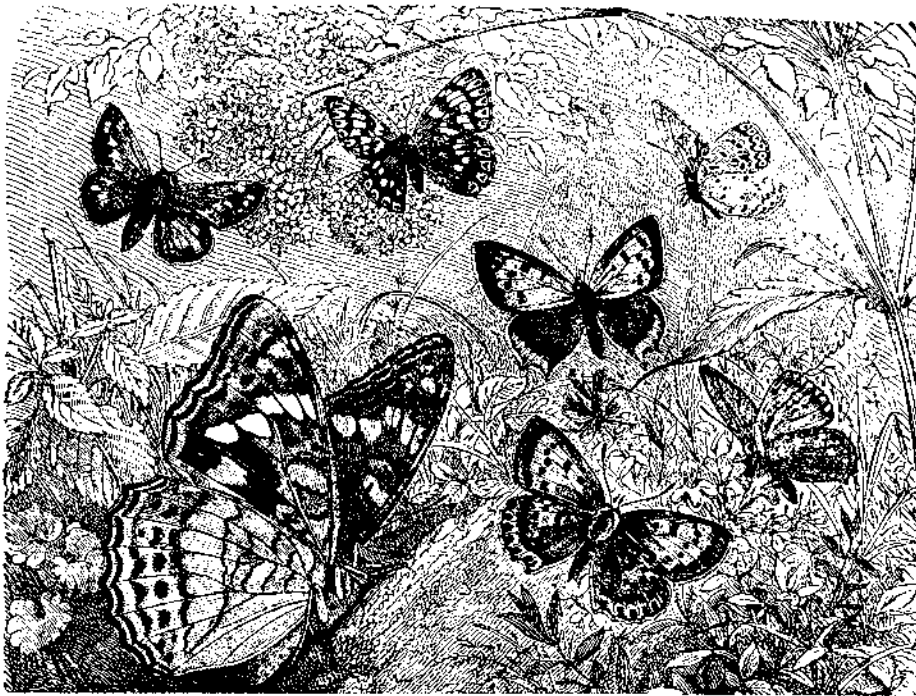
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The Black Swallowtail Butterfly flies with exceeding rapidity, nearly in a straight line, and is very difficult to capture. The color of the wings is black, variegated most beautifully with yellow markings, and near the extremity of each hinder wing is a circular red spot, surmounted by a crescent of blue, and the whole surrounded by a black ring. Its young are green with black stripes spotted with yellow dots. When the caterpillar is disturbed, a pair of soft antennæ are released, producing an odor to discourage predators. The young feed on parsley and similar plants.

The Red Admiral is one of the most gorgeous of Butterflies. The color of the wings is a deep black, relieved by a broad band of scarlet across each, and a series of semicircular blue marks edge each wing. It is usually found in woods and lanes, where there are nettles, as the larva feeds upon that plant. It appears about the middle of August.

Its orange color and distinctive white-spotted black edging make the Monarch Butterfly one of the most recognized butterflies. Its white, yellow and black striped young feed on milkweed, which contains a poison that is stored in the caterpillar's body. As an adult, the butterfly retains that poison, making it undesirable for predators. Birds often learn to avoid the distinctive butterfly. Each year, millions of Monarch Butterflies migrate from North America to Central Mexico.

The Viceroy Butterfly looks very similar to the Monarch Butterfly; the most noticeable difference being a horizontal black band on the bottom wing which the Monarch lacks. It was once believed the Viceroy Butterfly mimicked the colors of the Monarch Butterfly to avoid being eaten by predators, but more recent studies question that notion.



Butterflies are popular summer insects, adored by adults and children alike. You can attract more butterflies to your yard by planting the types of plants the young feed on, as well as flowering plants, such as the increasingly popular “Butterfly Bush,” to lure the adults.

Spend a sunny summer afternoon in a comfortable, shady location, and see how many butterflies you can identify in your own backyard or local park.

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