

Butterfly & Moth Fact Sheet

Insects that have certain basic structures that are the same are classified into large groups or orders. Butterflies and moths are members of the order Lepidoptera. There are about 10,000 species of Lepidoptera in North America and 120,000 species worldwide. In Greek *leidos* means scale and *ptera* means wings. The scales on the upper and under side of the wings provide the distinctive patterns and colors.

In general, butterflies are thought of as bright and colorful and moths as gray, brown, and white, but this is not always true. Butterflies and moths usually differ in four ways: 1) the time of day when they are active, 2) how they hold their wings when resting, 3) the shape of their body, and 4) the shape of the antennae.

Although moths and butterflies have many natural enemies, man is their number one enemy. They have no defense against the destruction of natural habitat and the use of herbicides. For moths, floodlights at malls, intersections, and athletic fields are also very destructive. Creating a butterfly garden and rearing butterflies and moths from eggs for release are two ways we can help protect and conserve them.

Butterflies

- ◆ Every part of their thin body and wings are covered with scales.
- ◆ Fly only during the day when it is warm.
- ◆ Fold their wings straight up over their bodies when resting.
- ◆ Antennae have bare knobs at the end and are used for smell and also for hearing, according to some experts.
- ◆ Pass through 4 stages of development -- egg, larva or caterpillar, pupa or chrysalis, adult.
- ◆ As caterpillars they can be destructive to flower gardens and crops because of their huge appetite.
- ◆ In the adult stage they are harmless and beautiful.
- ◆ They use their proboscis -- a long, tube-like tongue that can be uncoiled -- for drinking nectar.
- ◆ Two large compound eyes detect color and movement.
- ◆ Some are migratory and travel great distances.

Moths

- ◆ Fly only at dusk and at night.
- ◆ Every part of their body is covered with scales.
- ◆ Have a plump body.
- ◆ Spread their wings flat when resting.
- ◆ Antennae are either hairy or plume-like and end in a point.
- ◆ Attracted to light or white flowers that are open at night.