

Butterfly Information

COMPLIMENTS OF
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Is it a moth or butterfly?

A better way to distinguish moths and butterflies is to look at their antennae. Butterfly antennae are shaped somewhat like a golf club, with a long shaft that has a "club" at its end. The vast majority of moths have antennae that are either simple filaments, tapering to a point at their ends, or are very complicated structures with many cross filaments, looking somewhat like radar antennae.

Brightly colored blue, purple, and red flowers are the most attractive to butterflies.

It is important to know that caterpillars, such as the Gypsy moth caterpillar, often compete with Butterflies and their larvae for food.

How many kinds of butterflies are there?

There are approximately 20,000 species of butterflies in the world. About 725 species have occurred in North America north of Mexico, with about 575 of these occurring regularly in the lower 48 states of the United States, and with about 275 species occurring regularly in Canada. Roughly 2000 species are found in Mexico.

How many kinds of butterflies can I find near where I live?

In most parts of the United States, you can find roughly 100 species of butterflies near your home. As you go northward into Canada the number decreases, while as you go southward the number increases.

There are seven families of butterflies, plus the Hesperidae family (commonly called "Skippers") that have the same characteristics as moths and butterflies. The Nymphalidae family (commonly called "Brush Footed" butterflies) make up the largest family, of which eleven members are found in the Northeast. Brush Footed butterflies are known to be strong fliers.

Several species are migratory.

A butterfly's life cycle is very complex. Butterflies begin as eggs, then metamorphose into larvae, also known as caterpillars. Caterpillars then metamorphose again into a pupa, and then Again into the adult winged butterfly we are all familiar with.

