

BUTTERFLIES OF THE ILLAWARRA



Making your Garden Butterfly Friendly

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Every garden, no matter how small is visited by butterflies from time to time. This brochure will help you identify some common butterflies that live in your local area, provide insight into the lifecycle of butterflies and offer tips to help make your garden butterfly friendly.

Australia is home to more than 400 species of butterflies, with the Illawarra region supporting a wide range of beautiful and diverse butterfly species. The majority of local butterflies are native to Australia like the beautiful Orchard Swallowtail and others have simply found their way here, like the well known Monarch butterfly.



THE ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies are very attractive insects. As well as being beautiful to watch, they are very useful, playing a crucial role in the ecosystem. Many plants need to have pollen shared between the male and female parts of the plants by insects so they can reproduce and create new plants. Butterflies and bees are the most important insects at performing this role; they are called the pollinators.

Butterflies are an important indicator of the health and biodiversity of our local backyards, parks and reserves. Many butterflies stay very close to the same plants their eggs were laid on. The same species can often occur on the same host plant year after year. Because of this trait, butterflies can be sensitive to vegetation loss through land clearing and easily become locally extinct.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A BUTTERFLY



Butterflies and moths are insects from the Order Lepidoptera which means 'scaly wings'. They have two pairs of wings which are covered in tiny overlapping scales like tiles on a roof.

Butterflies have large eyes and two antennae. The female antennae are generally long and slender and the male antennae are feathery.

The mouth parts of the butterfly have been lengthened to form a coiled tube called a proboscis for piercing and sucking nectar. Amazingly, butterflies' 'feet' (called tarsi) have a sense similar to taste. When they touch sweet liquids such as nectar with their 'feet' it triggers the proboscis to uncoil.



This photo by Vicki Waters shows a Zebra Blue Butterfly sucking up nectar from a flower using its proboscis.

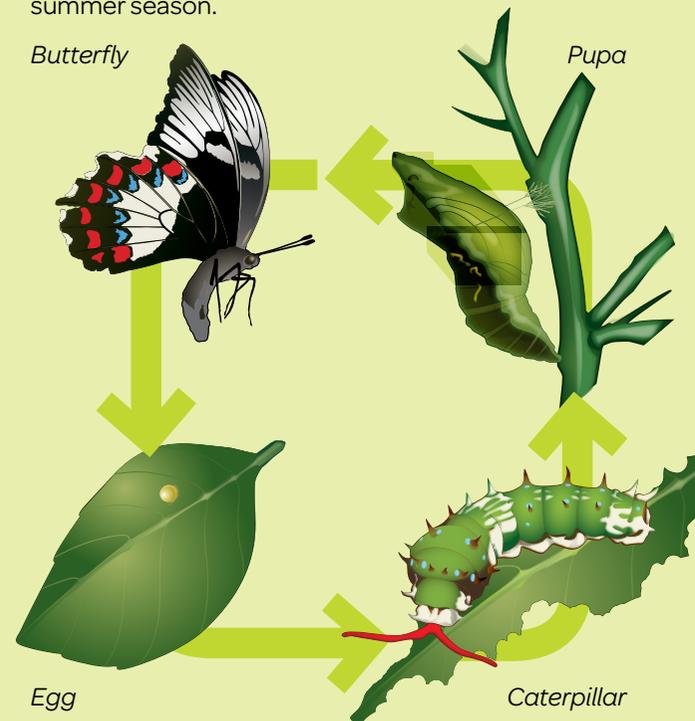
THE LIFECYCLE OF A BUTTERFLY



Butterflies begin life as an egg, laid onto a food source (called the host plant) by the parent butterfly. From the egg emerges a caterpillar (also called the butterfly larvae). The caterpillar's only job is to eat and once it has grown large enough, it will enter the pupal (chrysalis) stage. Through an incredible process called metamorphosis, the pupa will transform into a beautiful butterfly.

The average lifespan of an adult butterfly is two to four weeks however this can be different from species to species. A few species like the Monarch butterfly can live for many months.

In cool regions, it can take up to 6 months for the whole cycle from egg to adult but the cycle of many tropical butterflies is only 3 weeks from egg to adult. Many species will stay in the pupa phase over winter and emerge as a butterfly in the spring or early summer season.



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Bright Copper
Paralucia aurifer, (S)
🐛 Oct-Feb, Image: Vicki Waters



Eastern Ringed Xenia
Geitoneura acantha, (M)
🐛 Dec-May, Image: John Tann



Monarch
Danaus plexippus, (L-XL) ●
🐛 All year, Image: Keely Boyton



Common Brown
Heteronympha merope, (L)
🐛 Sept-May, Image: Vicki Waters



Yellow Admiral
Vanessa itea, (M)
🐛 All year, Image: Vicki Waters



Australian Painted Lady
Vanessa kershawi, (M)
🐛 Aug-May, Image: Simone Harvey

This poster showcases 15 butterflies found in the Illawarra and includes information to help you identify them. The butterflies featured are the most common species you are likely to notice in your backyard.

The images and details provided are a basic introductory guide to identifying butterflies and caterpillars. In some species, the male and female butterflies may have different wing markings and wing size to those examples shown in the poster. The upper and underside of the wings can also differ considerably between species.

Caterpillars can also change the way they look quite a lot as they grow. Depending on the age of a caterpillar, it may look quite different to those examples in the illustrations.



Dainty Swallowtail
Papilio anactus, (L)
🐛 Nov-Apr, Image: Michael Jeffries



Orchard Swallowtail
Papilio aegaeus, (XL)
🐛 Oct-May, Image: Allison Mellor



Common Grass Blue
Zizina labradus, (S)
🐛 All year, Image: M Kadavoor

Creating a butterfly garden

A garden attractive to butterflies provides everything they need to see them through from egg to adult. The garden needs flowering plants to provide nectar for adult butterflies, places for them to hibernate and lay eggs and food for the caterpillars.

One of the most important resources for butterflies is the food plant for the caterpillar. These are called host plants. Having host plants in your garden will ensure butterflies continue to visit. Remember that chewed plant leaves are a sign that in a month or two you will have the company of beautiful butterflies.

This garden illustration shows examples of host plants that are attractive to one or more of the 15 butterflies pictured around the illustration.

For more ideas and inspiration about local native plants or edible plants you can grow in your garden, see Councils *Grow Local Illawarra Native Garden Guide* and *Grow Local Illawarra Edible Garden Guide*.

Key:

 Represents the host plant for the colour coded butterfly.

- (S) Small Wing span 2cm - 3.5cm
- (M) Medium Wing span 4cm - 6cm
- (L) Large Wing span 7cm - 8cm
- (XL) Extra large Wing span 9cm - 12cm

 This is when you are most likely to spot this butterfly.

● Not native to Australia

Artwork and Illustrations by Jane Smith



1. Native Finger Lime
Citrus australasia
2. Weeping Grass
Microlaena stipoides
3. Tussock Grass
Poa labillardieri var. *labillardieri*
4. Kangaroo Grass
Themeda australis
5. Dwarf Nettle
Urtica urens
6. Everlasting Daises
Xerochrysum bracteatum
7. Orange Tree
Citrus sinensis
8. Orange Thorn
Pittosporum multiflorum
9. Garden Peas
Members of *Fabaceae* family
10. Golden Tip
Goodia lotifolia
11. Plumbago
Plumbago zeylanica
12. Mistletoe
Ameyma spp., *Dendrophoe* spp. and *Muellerina* spp.
13. Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage
Members of *Brassica* family
14. Mat Rush
Lomandra longifolia

Pea Blue
Lampides boeticus, (S)
🐛 All year, Image: JM Garg



Zebra Blue
Leptotes plinius, (S)
🐛 Jan-Jun, Image: Vicki Waters



Common Jezabel
Delias nigrina, (L)
🐛 All year, Image: Vicki Waters



Cabbage White
Pieris rapae, (M) ●
🐛 Sept-May, Image: Allison Mellor



Splendid Ochre
Trapaizites symmorus, (M)
🐛 Jan-Mar, Image: Vicki Waters



Orange Ochre
Trapaizites eliena, (S)
🐛 Oct-Mar, Image: Michael Jeffries



SOME FACTS ABOUT BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies can't fly if they are too cold (body temperature below about 25 degrees) which is why you will most often see them in warmer months in the sun.



The Monarch butterfly made its way to Australia in the early 1870's from North America. The caterpillar feeds on toxic introduced milkweed plants. The caterpillar and butterfly retain this poison, making themselves unpalatable to predators.



The Cabbage White butterfly was introduced from Europe in the 1930s. It is a serious agricultural pest, with caterpillars eating plants like cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli.



The fastest butterflies can fly at over 48 km/hour, the slowest at only 8 km/hour.



Adult butterflies are most attracted to white, blue, purple and violet flowers.



Caterpillars are boneless (like adult butterflies) but have around 2,000 muscles. The human body has only about 650 muscles.



Many chemical sprays can harm butterflies and other flying insects. Gardening organically without chemical sprays will benefit the insects that live in and visit your garden.



MORE INFORMATION

Help us gather more information about local butterflies. If you see a butterfly or caterpillar in your yard, tell us about it - where you saw it, what sort of plants it was attracted to and what it looked like. Take a photo if you can, and send it to sustainability@shellharbour.nsw.gov.au.

Thankyou to all the people who generously contributed images and feedback for this brochure, especially Terry Rankmore, Vicki Waters, Jedda Lemmon, Dave Britton and James Wallman.

Whilst all due care has been given to ensure the contents of this brochure are accurate, no legal responsibility is accepted for any errors or omissions.



Cover image of Orchard Swallowtail butterfly by Vicki Waters.

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References - The Complete Field Guide to Butterflies of Australia by Michael F Brady 2004, The Butterflies of Australia by Albert Orr and Roger Kitching 2010