



BRANCHING OUT

Autumn 2014

Butterflies and Moths - Winged Wonders of the World

Butterflies and moths make up the insect order Lepidoptera, a term derived from Ancient Greek meaning “scale wing”. With over 250,000 species worldwide, they are a critical component of the planet’s ecosystems. Here in the Port Franks-Grand Bend corridor, the oak savanna with its diversity of plant life is ideal habitat for a large number of these fascinating and often spectacular insects.

Importance

- pollinate wildflowers, trees and food crops
- provide food for birds
- many butterflies and moths have evolved chemical defences to deter predators, which have the potential for use in medicine
- give nature photographers something to do

Interesting Facts

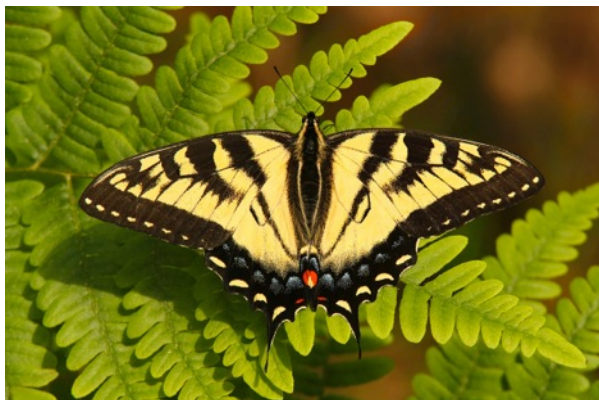
- some female moths can detect a male from up to 10 km away
- some moths are excellent mimics, resembling hummingbirds, bees and even bird droppings to avoid detection by predators!
- Butterflies’ feet have sense organs that can taste the sugar in nectar.
- earliest known butterfly fossils are from the mid Eocene epoch, between 40-50 million years ago
- the first Lepidopterans are believed to have evolved between 140 and 200 million years ago at the same time that flowering plants were evolving.



Bird Dropping Moth

Butterfly or Moth?

Butterflies	Moths
diurnal (fly during the day)	mostly nocturnal
pupa is usually a hard, smooth chrysalis	pupa is usually protected in a silk-wrapped cocoon
antennae are thin with a club on the end	antennae are feathery and broad
body is not as fuzzy as moths	body is plump and fuzzy
attract mates using visual clues	attract mates using chemical signals (pheromones)
often more brightly coloured	most are drably coloured



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail



Cecropia

Where Have All the Monarchs Gone?

Once a common sight across eastern North America, Monarch numbers have plummeted in recent years. Here in Ontario, there is concern that they could disappear entirely from the province in the next 10 years.

Reasons For Their Decline...Habitat Loss, Habitat Loss, Habitat Loss

- Illegal logging in Mexico wintering grounds
- Climate change, increasingly severe weather events
- Ongoing drought in the southern US has dramatically reduced the food supply for migrating Monarchs
- Increased use of herbicides has eliminated billions of milkweed plants in North America, the only host plant for Monarch larvae

What You Can Do To Help

- Plant milkweed to help create “Monarch Butterfly way stations” ... Common, Purple, Swamp and Butterfly milkweed are all native plants that support Monarch larvae and provide nectar for adults
- Plant other native wildflowers and shrubs as an additional source of nectar for adult Monarchs
- Participate in local butterfly counts
- Report sightings to Monarch Butterfly Journey North... <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/AboutFall.html>
- Avoid using pesticides (both herbicides and insecticides can reduce Monarch populations)
- Purchase organic produce when available



Monarch Nectaring on New England Aster



Monarch larva feeding on Butterfly Milkweed

A Changing Ecosystem

The recent tornado has left many residents reeling from extensive property damage and large numbers of fallen trees. Gone are many of the majestic oaks and pines that drew us all to this area in the first place. If there's a silver lining in the aftermath of the storm, it may be that a more open canopy will create increased opportunities for butterfly gardens and meadows. With less competition for sunlight, we can expect the understory to flourish in coming years. Planting native wildflowers and shrubs will help restore some of the natural habitat that has been lost. If you have a tree trunk that's been snapped off, and it poses no threat to property or safety, you might wish to leave it standing. Remember that dead trees provide excellent habitat for nesting woodpeckers and small mammals like flying squirrels, and are an integral component of any forest ecosystem.



Upcoming Events

Sept 6 @ 1:30 - Brenda Kulon, author of “The Butterfly Whisperer” - HWCA Clubhouse
Sept 27 9 am - 3 pm - Autumn Native Tree and Shrub Sale with Hayley Hartford - 9939 Old River Rd

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