

BUTTERFLIES OF SOUTH EASTERN QUEENSLAND

The term Lepidoptera is the order used to describe both the Butterfly and the Moth. Butterflies are generally classified into two superfamilies, the Hesperioidea (Skippers) and the Papilionoidea (All other butterflies).

Life cycle of the butterfly:

1. Egg – The female lays her egg on the host plants that have suitable food for caterpillars.
2. Larva (Caterpillar) – The caterpillars will moult several times. A fully grown caterpillar moults into a chrysalis that develops in a non-feeding stage.
3. Pupa (Chrysalis) – Which is where the larval organs are re-organised.
4. Adult (Butterfly) – The adult remains the same size for the rest of its life, once it emerges from the chrysalis. Soon after emerging they locate the opposite sex for mating.

The duration of the life cycle varies from species to species and may range from a few weeks to several years. They undergo dormancy in one or more stages for the protracted life cycles.

The adult butterflies life span differs between each species from a couple weeks to a few months.

The butterfly's adult structure consists of five main sections:

1. Head – Consist of two large compound eyes, antenna and proboscis.
2. Thorax – This is composed of three sections (Prothorax, Mesothorax, Metathorax)
3. Legs – They generally consist of six legs.
4. Wings – Adult butterflies have two pairs of fully developed wings.
5. Abdomen – The abdomen consists of 10 segments.

Butterflies are primarily a tropical group of insects. They are not well adapted to arid environments of low moisture and extreme high temperatures.

The male and female forms of the Regent Skipper are almost identical, which is the only butterfly to display these traits.

The Cabbage butterfly is the only noxious species in Australia.

The butterfly can detect particular chemicals on their feet. Female butterflies have been known to scratch plants to verify they are on the correct host plant to lay her eggs.

Butterflies have a proboscis, similar to a long tube, that uncoils and coils. In the centre of the proboscis there is a food tube through which the nectar is siphoned from, primarily flowers but also water from puddles, sap flows and fermenting juices rotting fruit and dead animals.

Example of host plants for butterflies;

- Cupaniopsis anacardioides (Tuckeroo) – Nine Species of butterfly (Hairy Line-blue)
- Ficus coronata (Sandpaper fig) – Two species of butterfly (Common Moonbeam Butterfly)
- Cassytha pubescens (Dodder) – Four species of butterfly (Large Dusky-blue)
- Gahnia clarkiei (Swamp Saw Sedge) – Five species of butterfly (Sword-grass Browns)
- Lomandra hystrix (Mat rush) – Seven species of butterfly (Common White-spot Skipper)
- Imperata cylindrical (Blady grass) – Six species of Butterfly (Evening Brown)
- Ottlochloa gracillima (Graceful grass) – Six species of Butterfly (Brown Ringlet)

The Jezebel butterflies host plants are the Mistletoe; the mistletoe on the host tree will dictate which species of butterfly will use this as their host plant.