



On December 1, 2013, the Butterfly Conservatory at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden opened. It had been planned nearly ten years before and took two years to construct the exhibit structure. Martin Feather, native from Northern England, was responsible for bringing this special exhibit to South Florida.

This is not an ordinary exhibit, by any means. The building requires containment for the nearly 2,500 butterflies of 45 species from Asia, Central America and South America. The reason for the containment is to ensure that the butterflies can exist in an environment that is like their native surroundings. The average life-span of a butterfly is approximately three weeks. Fairchild imports pupae from foreign breeders on a regular basis and during the chrysalis stage they are cared for by staff inside a metamorphosis lab.

"Butterflies and plants have a symbiotic relationship, meaning they depend on each other for survival. Plants provide caterpillars and butterflies food and shelter, while butterflies pollinate flowering plants, facilitating their reproduction. This interdependence highlights the importance of the conservation of biodiversity; the loss of an individual species can have devastating impacts on an entire ecosystem." <fairchildgarden.org>

At the Wings of the Tropics you can learn about butterfly conservation and see the various species from around the world. Why is conservation so important? According to gardenclub.org:

"Do you ever wonder 'Where have all the butterflies gone?' Butterfly populations are declining worldwide primarily due to loss of habitat (caused by modern agricultural and forestry practices, development and cropland conversion) and consequently, the loss of food sources provided there. Today, butterflies are becoming increasingly scarce, with many endangered and some extinct. So great has been the decline in the number of monarchs in the last two decades (90% in recent years), that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has launched a major campaign aimed at saving the declining monarch butterfly.

Butterflies are a part of the web of life. They support birds and amphibians, as well as insects. No matter what stage of its life cycle (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis or adult), the butterfly is a source of food for some other creature. When you create a garden that attracts butterflies, you create a habitat for a variety of beneficial insects, birds, bees and other wildlife.

The butterfly's primary contribution is to pollinate flowers, including fruit and vegetable blossoms that provide nectar for a variety of adults. Many species of native plants provide food and nectar for butterflies and their larvae. One of the best ways to help butterflies survive is to provide an adequate habitat in our own gardens and neighborhood communities. You, too, can help conserve butterflies by planting the nectar and larval plants they need to survive during all stages of their life."

This photo program shares some of the delights you will find at the Wings of the Tropics exhibit at Fairchild. Enjoy!





Containment doorway to ensure butterflies remain and do not leave with visitors or staff



IDENTIFICATION GUIDE TO BUTTERFLIES
These butterflies represent species from Central America, South America, Africa and Southeast Asia.

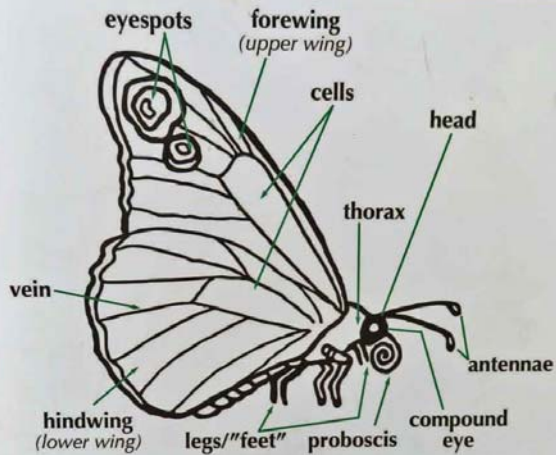


NECTAR PLANTS GUIDE

Nectar plants are the main source of food for most butterflies. Some plants will provide pollen as well. This guide will help you identify the ones in the conservatory.



Parts of a Butterfly



dorsal

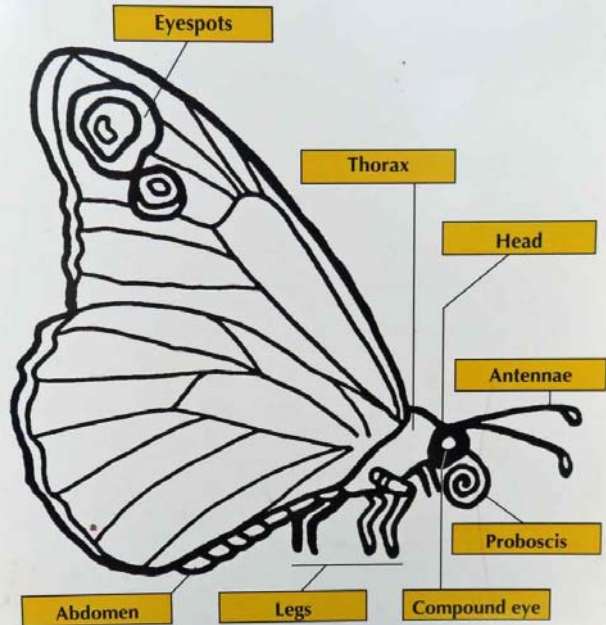
wings open (upper side)



ventral

wings closed (under side)

Parts of a Butterfly



What are the differences between butterflies and moths?



BUTTERFLIES
have clubbed antennae



MOTHS
have feathered antennae

What are the differences between butterflies and moths?



BUTTERFLIES
do not make cocoons



MOTHS
make cocoons

Metamorphosis lab





Releasing the Butterflies



Butterflies feeding



Giant Owl – *Caligo memnon*



Glasswing - *Greta oto*



Hummingbirds in the Wings of the Tropics

Costa's Hummingbird

Calypte costae



A desert hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird breeds in the Sonoran and Mojave Deserts of California and Arizona. It departs the desert in the hottest days of summer, moving to chaparral, scrub, or woodland habitat.

Adult Description

Small hummingbird. Green upperparts. Male has iridescent violet crown and gorget (throat patch). Gorget extends out sides of throat. Female has white throat and underparts, sometimes with some violet feathers.

Anna's Hummingbird

Calypte anna



Anna's Hummingbirds are among the most common hummingbirds along the Pacific Coast, yet they're anything but common in appearance. With their iridescent emerald feathers and sparkling rose-pink throats, they are more like flying jewelry than birds. Though no larger than a ping-pong ball and no heavier than a rickel, Anna's Hummingbirds make a strong impression.

Size & Shape

Tiny among birds, Anna's are medium-sized and stocky for a hummingbird. They have a straight, shortish bill and a fairly broad tail. When perched, wingtips meet the tip of their short tail. Anna's Hummingbirds are mostly green and gray, without any rufous or orange marks on the body. The male's head and throat are covered in iridescent reddish-pink feathers that can look dull brown or gray without direct sunlight.



Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden has two other exciting photo programs:
Botanic Garden **Rare Plant House—Chihuly's End of Day Tower**



Sources: <https://www.fairchildgarden.org/Horticulture/Wings-Of-The-Tropics>, <https://www.fairchildgarden.org/About-Fairchild/Mission-History>, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/museumday/venues/museum/fairchild-tropical-botanic-garden/>, <https://www.gardentraveler.com/tag/rare-plants/#.XCdJKUBKiBY>, <https://www.fairchildgarden.org/horticulture/plant-collections/exhibits/annex-butterfly-south-florida-garden-exhibit>, <https://communitynewspapers.com/pinecrest/fairchild-gardens-butterfly-dreams/>, http://vpa.dadeschools.net/Assests%202013-2014/MEP/RG1415_%20FTBG%20Revised.pdf and <http://gardenclub.org/resources/projects/ngc-inviting-butterflies-into-your-garden.pdf>.

acuri.net John R. Vincenti Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden: Wings of the Tropics