



Smithsonian

Designing Butterfly Exhibits



Nicole Sipe

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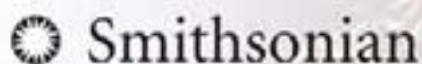
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The background of the page is a collage. On the left and bottom, there are several colorful butterflies, including a large yellow and orange one, a blue one, and a white one. On the right, there are faint, stylized gears and circular patterns in shades of blue and purple.

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Beautiful Butterflies

A brightly colored butterfly spreads its wings and takes flight. A spotted butterfly drinks sweet nectar from a nearby flower. A group of butterflies flutters around a flowering bush, looking for places to land.

From where you stand, you see butterflies flit and float around you. Their delicate wings brush against your arms. They dance in front of your eyes. You are surrounded by winged creatures. Lush plants and blooming flowers are everywhere in this warm and **humid** (HYOO-mid) place.

A place where you can go and be surrounded by butterflies might seem like a dream. But butterfly exhibits are real. They serve an important role, too.

Butterflies are an important part of **ecosystems**. Sadly, many butterfly species are at risk of **extinction**. This is where butterfly exhibits come in. In enclosed spaces, we can learn more about these winged creatures. We can see how their lives are linked with the plants they depend on. And, we can learn what we can do to protect these insects from the dangers of living in the wild.



A group of butterflies is called a kaleidoscope (kuh-LIE-duh-skohp). A group of caterpillars is called an army.




tree nymph butterfly

In the Wild


Butterflies are more than just bright colors and pretty wings. They help to **pollinate** flowers and plants. Many plants depend on pollinators, such as butterflies, to survive. Without them, these plants would not be able to grow new seeds.

Butterflies are also important to food chains. They are food for other animals. Many birds, bats, and mice eat butterflies and caterpillars. When butterflies leave or die, the animals that eat them have less food. They will soon move to a new place that has more food for them. In turn, larger animals that eat birds, bats, and mice have less to eat, too.

Scientists use butterflies to measure the health of an area. If butterflies leave a place or begin to die in large numbers, scientists pay attention. It is a sign that something has changed. More problems may be on the way. The opposite is true, too. Seeing lots of butterflies and caterpillars is a good sign that an area is healthy.



A bird catches a caterpillar.



A mouse feeds on monarch butterflies.

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