

# 10 Amazing Butterfly Facts

By Comfort for Critters

Nothing compares to strolling through a garden and seeing a butterfly land on a nearby flower. It's an almost magical feeling of watching nature unfold. Or maybe it's just me. These beautiful flying creatures remind us that not all insects need to be squashed underfoot. Really no insect should meet this fate if avoidable, but I'll concede the point, that it probably IS just me.

Butterflies are also quite valuable to the environment and astounding in many ways. So much beauty and brilliance packed into these floating works of art. What a Creator we have to imagine such a thing! These ten amazing facts about butterflies may just help you see even more beauty in them, as they flit by.

**1 - What Variety!** - There are roughly 20,000 species of butterflies in the world. In most parts of the U.S., you'll find at least 100 different species! They only live about a month, so stop and appreciate them whenever they are near.

**2 - Voracious & Totally Gross Eaters** - While it's awesome to see a butterfly happily sip nectar from flowers through their straw-like tongue, some species will take a stronger stomach to watch. These butterflies never visit flowers but dine on tree sap, rotting fruit, animal dung and decaying animals. Some even have cravings for mud, human sweat (which is probably why they land on you) and urine (including their own). Since they "taste" using tiny receptors in their feet, it's no wonder they are not always picky about what they consume.

**3 - Sun Worshippers** - They actually need the warmth of the sun, in order to fly. They are cold-blooded, so they can only fly if their body temperature is over 86 degrees Fahrenheit. Below that, they will simply drop to the ground!

**4 - Touching's Okay** - Contrary to what many people think, it's okay to touch a butterfly. You may come away with a bit of their color on you, but they are completely unharmed. The color which rubs off is actually tiny scales. Yes, scales. Butterflies have two pairs of large wings, all covered in iridescent scales, too small to easily see. If all the scales were removed, the butterfly would simply be left with a transparent membrane.

**5 - They're Survivors** - They can withstand harsh rain and even freezing temperatures. Butterflies will hide-out on the underside of a leaf, between rocks, or crawl down amongst blades of grass to avoid storms and to sleep at night. Many types of butterflies can survive even cold winter climates, but at least one stage in their lifecycle must be resistant to freezing. Typically they survive the winter as either caterpillars or pupas, safely tucked away. Some even have tricky ways to avoid predators. The Mourning Cloak butterfly will actually "play dead" in order to avoid detection.

**6 - First Aid Works** - If you find an injured butterfly, you can help nurture it back to health! Usually by letting it rest, and feeding it the right solution, it will happily fly away once it has

recovered. The simplest solution is just a teaspoon of sugar, mixed into 10 teaspoons of room temperature water (try not to use tap water, due to the chemicals it contains).

**7 - Super-Cool Features** - Butterflies may only be able to see red, green and yellow, but they make up for it by seeing ultraviolet light, which humans cannot. In addition, their bodies are covered in small sensory hairs, which they use to explore their environment. These hairs also gather wind information as they fly at speeds anywhere from 5 to 30 miles per hour.

**8 - They Make Great Pets** - Caterpillars can be wonderful pets, with many "kits" on the market to house and care for them. As they move through their stages, emerging as butterflies in the end, they can be released into the wild. Butterflies can also be kept as pets, but all their special needs should be met. This includes the proper nutrition and plenty of space to fly!

**9 - Great Travelers** - The beautiful Monarch butterflies are known for their long migration. They can travel up to 2,000 miles, flying from the Great Lakes region to the Gulf of Mexico. They lay their eggs and a new generation of monarchs will travel back in the spring.

**10 - They're Important!** - Butterflies are the second largest group of pollinators, next to bees. With the decline in the bee population, they have become even more important to our food chain. Their largest threat is the disappearance of their natural habitat, which is thankfully something we can all do something about. There are many wonderful trees, bushes, flowers and vegetable plants which will bring butterflies to your yard and give them a habitat for survival.

They're amazing, they're important and they're flying by, ready to enjoy. Spread the word on their importance to the environment and leave out a saucer of sugar-water to see who lands for a quick slurp!

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