

Fact Sheet

Butterflies Go Free 2009

“Butterflies of the Americas” – 12th edition

WHEN	February 19 to April 26, 2009 Tuesday to Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open on Mondays, February 23 (school break), March 2 (school break) and April 13 (Easter)
WHERE	Montréal Botanical Garden (Main Exhibition Greenhouse) 4101, rue Sherbrooke Est (Pie-IX metro station)
MORE INFORMATION	514 872-1400 / museumsnature.ca

RECORD BOOK**Butterflies of the Americas at *Butterflies Go Free***

Wingspan	Largest Quebec butterfly or moth	<i>Cecropia moth</i> / <i>Hyalophora cecropia</i>
Migration	Most determined	Monarch / <i>Danaus plexippus</i>
Unusual patterns	Most owl-like	Owl butterfly / <i>Caligo</i> sp.
Showy colour	Most fascinating	Blue morpho / <i>Morpho</i> sp.
Longevity	Longest lifespan	Julia

Visitors receive an illustrated guide so that they can identify the butterflies.

<i>Butterflies Go Free</i> statistics	Number of butterflies in the greenhouse	± 1,500
	Number of butterflies released every day	± 100*
	Number of butterflies released during the event	± 15,000
	Total number of species present during the event	More than 90
	Sources	19 countries**
	Temperature in the greenhouse	24°C to 29°C***
	Number of staff in the Main Exhibition Greenhouse	2 to 5
	Attendance at <i>Butterflies Go Free</i> in 2008	133,568
	Attendance at <i>Butterflies Go Free</i> since 1998	1,158,190

* Note that the Insectarium staff releases the butterflies in front of visitors (schedule varies). Visitors can expect to see about fifty different species on any given day

** List of countries: Australia, **Belize**, **Canada**, **Colombia**, **Costa Rica**, **Ecuador**, **El Salvador**, England, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, **Peru**, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, **United States** and **Venezuela**

*** With a relative humidity factor between 35% and 60%, the humidex reaches highs of 25°C to 36°C.

FAVOURITE PLANTS	Nectar plants	Butterfly bush • Heliotrope • Hyacinth • Yellow sage • Star duster • Indian hawthorn • Lollypop plant
	Host plants*	Asclepias • Calliandra • Key lime • Guava • Passion flower
	Ornamental plants	Amaryllis • Aphandra • Eucalyptus • Hibiscus • Hydrangea • Lilies • Plumbago

* Plants where females lay their eggs.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO SEE THE BUTTERFLIES? WHEN ARE THEY MOST ACTIVE?

A: The butterflies are **generally more active** in the **morning**, on **sunny days**, and **when there is a change in atmospheric pressure**.

Many factors influence butterfly behaviour. Moths (Heterocera) rest in daytime, and the times when the butterflies are active vary from one individual and one species to another. Generally speaking, butterflies and moths move about to feed or for mating, i.e. to find a partner, defend their territory or lay eggs on a host plant.

Q: HOW LONG DO BUTTERFLIES LIVE?

A: Butterflies live **one month, on average**, with some major differences in lifespans. Some don't eat, meaning that they lead very short lives – just a few days, enough time to find a partner and mate. Others beat records for longevity, such as the monarchs that fly all the way from Quebec to Mexico for the winter.

Q: WHAT IS THE BIGGEST BUTTERFLY IN THIS YEAR'S EVENT?

A: The **attacus atlas cobra moth**, one of the world's biggest moths. It has a wingspan of 15 to 25 cm.

Q: HOW MANY SPECIES OF BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS ARE THERE IN THE WORLD?

A: There are close to **180,000 species** of butterflies and moths, with nearly **12,500 of them in North America and 3,051 recorded in Quebec**.

Q: HOW LONG HAVE BUTTERFLIES BEEN ON EARTH?

A: Scientists say that the oldest known fossil of a caterpillar is from about **180 million years ago**.

Q: DO ALL CATERPILLARS TURN INTO BUTTERFLIES OR MOTHS?

A: Yes. Butterflies systematically go through a number of stages: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly. The time the insect spends as a caterpillar allows it to store energy, while it undergoes profound anatomical and physiological changes as a chrysalis, and adulthood is devoted to reproduction.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE EVENT IS OVER?

A: Once the event is over, many butterflies are collected for the Insectarium's educational needs. The live butterflies are sent to other butterfly houses in Quebec and the New Brunswick Botanical Garden to spend the rest of their days.