



## **Butterflies Go Free takes flight on the wings of biodiversity**

**Montréal, February 17, 2010** – Montréal’s Nature Museums are pleased to announce the 13th edition of **Butterflies Go Free** presented by the Insectarium in the Main Exhibition Greenhouse at the Botanical Garden from February 18 to April 25. During this **International Year of Biodiversity**, Charles-Mathieu Brunelle, director of Montréal’s nature museums, invites the public to “contemplate the beauty, fragility and tremendous diversity of butterflies throughout the world in order to develop a relationship with nature and learn more about it, understand it and protect it.”

Anne Charpentier, director of the Insectarium, said “On the Wings of Biodiversity” was chosen as this year’s theme because it “showcases our planet’s fascinating history and explains the life cycle of butterflies, their co-evolution with plants and their adaptation strategies.” Did you know that moths first appeared on earth 190 million years ago and butterflies first appeared 70 million years ago? Dinosaurs have disappeared, but butterflies are still here!

### **Biodiversity, an endless source of wonder**

**Butterflies Go Free** invites you to learn more about 50 to 75 butterfly species from around the globe. Of the some 1.8 million plant and animal species inventoried to date, two-thirds of them are insects, and close to 175,000 of that number are butterflies. And since some estimates suggest that there may be as many as half a million of them, it means that there are still thousands more species to be discovered. Given that the species extinction rate has increased a thousandfold in recent years as a result of human activities (climate change, pollution, species overexploitation, etc.), it is vital that we act to protect biodiversity.

### **Amazingly adaptable**

Butterflies (or Lepidoptera) appeared on Earth back in the days of the dinosaurs. They have since developed features allowing them to adapt to a vast range of conditions and environments. For instance, some of them feed on nectar from orchids with very deep nectaries, while others sport wing colours and patterns that protect them from predators. Co-evolution, or the way a particular butterfly has adapted specifically to a given plant – whether it feeds on it or pollinates it – has also led to the emergence of new species. These fascinating butterfly species are of special interest to scientists, to many cultures and to some communities which operate butterfly breeding farms as a way of protecting their often threatened habitat.

### **Butterflies Go Free**

The event presented in the Botanical Garden’s Main Exhibition Greenhouse, with temperatures of up to 29°C, holds plenty of splendid surprises for visitors, whether you’re already a butterfly fan or simply curious. Come get a close-up look at some 1,500 butterflies and moths from England, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Indonesia and elsewhere. Montréal’s Nature Museums invite you to enjoy a unique experience combining science and emotion!

<p><b>Butterflies Go Free 2010</b> February 18 to April 25 – Tuesday to Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. <i>Open Monday, February 22 (school break), March 1 (school break) and April 5 (Easter)</i></p>	<p><b>MONTRÉAL HIGH LIGHTS FESTIVAL</b> February 27 – until 2 a.m. <b><i>The 2nd Butterflies Go Free ALL-NIGHTER</i></b> Moths: Ancient survivors</p>
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### **Montréal’s Nature Museums**

Montréal’s Nature Museums – the Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden and Planetarium – helping people enjoy nature to the fullest. For more information: [museumsnature.ca](http://museumsnature.ca)

**Information:**

Karine Jalbert, Communications Coordinator  
Telephone: 514 872-1453  
E-mail: karinejalbert@ville.montreal.qc.ca

François Ouellet, Marketing Representative  
Telephone: 514 872-3232  
E-mail: fouellet\_2@ville.montreal.qc.ca

**Visual available on request**