

Metamorphosis: A Butterfly's Life Cycle

How much time do butterflies live?

Life expectancy on butterflies is variable and depends on many factors, such as size, species, location, and time of the year in which it reaches adulthood. The bigger the butterfly, the longer it lives.

The average time for the life of a butterfly is a month, though smaller species tend to live for about a week.

How does climate affect butterflies?

Butterflies are cold-blooded creatures, so climate is an aspect to be aware of.

If the butterfly's egg is laid just before the cold weather arrives, then it will stay in this stage until the new season arrives. As soon as it occurs, the caterpillar will incubate and everything will start again. If the butterfly is an adult specimen and winter comes without migrating to the south, it will hibernate in some place until the weather heats up. This means that a butterfly could live during many months, contrary to life expectancy. It all depends on the weather conditions and what these creatures do when winter arrives.

From Crawling to Flying: The Stages in a Butterfly's Life Cycle

First Stage: It grows in an egg between 3 and 8 days. It is a passive period in which caterpillars are formed. Females lay hundreds of eggs in spring or summer.

Second Stage: The Caterpillar period is active and the longest in the butterfly's cycle of life (if there is no hibernation). In this period changes in size are most notable, as it grows from an egg which measures 1mm, to a caterpillar that can easily reach 4cm. To reach this exceptional growth, caterpillars must consume a considerable amount of food. This growth forces the caterpillar to molt in several occasions. The last task is to find a safe place for nymphosis.

Third Stage: The Chrysalis, also known as cocoon and pupa, is a passive stage in which the total transformation occurs. Cells, which form a yellow substance, are in charge of reorganizing the insect's anatomy, from a Caterpillar to a butterfly. It is a complex process, still unknown to man. These cocoons have diverse shapes and colors, to allow camouflage. And this disguise is important for many species as they hibernate during this phase.

Fourth Stage: After it leaves the cocoon, the perfect insect has wings and can fly in search of food. Certain species can migrate through thousands of kilometers.

