

The Life of a Butterfly

A good place to find butterflies is where there is water because that means they will find the plants they like to eat. The life of a butterfly starts as a tiny egg. A mother butterfly can lay 200-1500 eggs at one time. The eggs are laid on a single leaf. Now you know how tiny each egg is! After about five days, the babies chew their way out of their eggs.

Now these babies are caterpillars, or **larva**. Each baby caterpillar starts to eat. It first eats the leaf on which it was born. Then it begins to eat other leaves nearby. Different kinds of caterpillars like different kinds of leaves. It eats so much it gets too fat for its skin! You might like to read the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. It is about how much a caterpillar eats! When that happens, the caterpillar sheds its old skin. It does this five or six times before it is full grown.

At last, the adult caterpillar makes a special kind of silk that makes it stick to a leaf. Then it sheds its skin one more time and becomes a **chrysalis** (kri-suh-lus). The outside of the chrysalis is hard. But inside the caterpillar is changing very fast.

Some kinds of butterflies only stay in the chrysalis for two weeks. Others might stay all winter. But one day, a butterfly comes out! Its wings will be soft and wet. They will be held by its body. The butterfly will be very tired and will want to rest. This magic change a butterfly makes from caterpillar to butterfly is called **metamorphosis** (meh-tuh-mor-fuh-sis).

After a few hours, it will begin to flap its wings. They will spread out and dry. Finally, the butterfly will fly away, looking for pretty flowers to sit on and more leaves to eat!

