

Butterfly Watching Facts for Beginners

Butterflying or butterfly watching has not been as popular in the past as bird watching but it has recently been becoming more popular. As more and more natural butterfly habitats are being destroyed, the awareness for the need to protect and conserve butterflies and their natural habitat seems to be the reason for an increase the interest in butterfly watching.

You might be surprised to know that, according to scientists' estimates, there are over 20,000 butterfly species in the world. In North America there are over 700 species of butterflies. That is a lot of butterflies available for the butterfly watching enthusiasts!



Butterfly watchers are called lepidopterists. Besides butterfly watching, they love to study the life cycle of the butterflies, catch and collect them, create and enjoy butterfly gardens, and some work hard to preserve the natural habitat of butterflies. Some adults and students become involved in doing an annual butterfly census to track the butterflies' traveling habits and their numbers in their species.

Capturing and mounting butterflies for collecting as a hobby is no longer encouraged. However, the Field Museum in Chicago has collected from all over the world over 90,000 specimens of butterflies. Besides visiting the museum, you can join groups like the North American Butterfly Association, the Lepidopterist Society and subscribe to journals like the Journal of Lepidopterists' Society.

Scores of books dedicated to butterfly watching are available in libraries and bookstores. There are butterfly watching clubs and seasonal festivals and parades devoted to butterfly watching activities.

You could spend very little for butterfly watching expenses or you could spend as much as you care to. There are butterfly nature reserves, field trips, butterfly releases, migrations watches, and general butterfly watching opportunities all over the world. Some species of butterflies thrive only where certain plants for food available to them, so it would be necessary for you to travel to observe them in their habitats.

Besides in your backyard butterfly garden, some points of interest where you can enjoy successful butterfly watching are in Singapore, Mexico, Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia, Niagara Park, Ontario, Butterfly Kingdom in South Carolina, and Wings of Paradise in Cambridge, Ontario. People from all over the world visit these butterfly watching hotspots. They provide butterfly watching enthusiasts a view of many species of butterflies and rare plants.

Some suggestions to get you started in the hobby of butterfly watching are that, although butterfly watching can be done alone, it is recommended that you go with a buddy. Accidents do happen and if you should happen to fall and sustain injuries, the buddy system will work for you. There are differing opinions on what color clothing is recommended for butterfly watching. Some say you should wear browns and greens so that you blend in and will not scare the butterflies away. Others recommend wearing bright colors to attract the butterflies. White clothing would cause the butterflies to see you from a distance and fly away. You might want to bring along binoculars and a notebook to record what you found while you were butterfly watching. You might want to keep a record of the species you find, notes about their habitat and food plants where you found the butterflies.

If you are just beginning butterfly watching, start out by going out on bright, warm, sunny days when the butterflies are active. Look for them in backyards, wetlands, meadows, woods, where there is fruit and anywhere you see brightly colored flowers. You are sure to see those delightful "flying flowers" around somewhere during your butterfly watching adventures.

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