

# Order:

# *Lepidoptera*

## part B - Butterflies

CLASSIFICATION
Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Insecta
<b>Order: Lepidoptera</b>
Family:
Subfamily:
Genus:
Species:

**Both Moths and Butterflies make up the order *Lepidoptera*. For part b - we look at Butterflies.**

Butterflies are perhaps the best-known group of insects. In Australia there are 416 butterfly species currently recognised, 398 are known from the mainland, with another 18 species on outlying islands. These are represented in six families: *Hesperiidae*, *Papilionidae*, *Pieridae*, *Nymphalidae*, *Riodinidae* and *Lycaenidae*.

Butterflies can be distinguished from moths as they fold their wings together back to back above their heads when resting. The butterfly antennae are thread-like with a club at the tip. Their bodies are more slender than that of moths. For the majority, butterfly caterpillars are harmless, having no 'hairs'. In general, caterpillars that do have 'hair' belong to the moth group. No matter what, if the caterpillar has 'hairs' we do not touch it!

Butterflies can be found Australia wide. The largest butterfly in Australia is the Birdwing butterflies – Ornithoptera group. Females of this butterfly can have a wing span of up to 15 cm.

Butterflies along with Moths undergo a complete metamorphosis; they have an egg stage, a larval stage and a pupa stage. The pupa undergoes complex changes during which it transforms into a butterfly (adult stage).

When a fresh caterpillar hatches from an egg it uses its chewing mouth parts to eat the leaves on which the egg was laid. Here the caterpillar will feed until it reaches full size, then shed its skin (exoskeleton) for a last time, revealing a pupa stage.

Most adult butterflies have a mouth part which is like a tube and is referred to as a proboscis. The adult butterfly uses this tube to suck nectar from flowers.



↓ A typical butterfly caterpillar from the Papilionidae family. With no 'hairs' this caterpillar is safe to handle.



→ A Birdwing butterfly caterpillar travelling across the plant seed pods to reach some leaves to eat .  
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