

Caterpillars

Whether you're exploring the wildest forests or a city garden, keep an eye out for caterpillars!

What are Caterpillars?

It may be hard to believe, but every moth and butterfly was once a caterpillar. After hatching from an egg, a caterpillar's job is to eat and grow until it's big enough to turn into an adult moth or butterfly. To see the connection between young and adult, count the legs: they both have six, though a caterpillar also has stubby false legs with bristly tips called prolegs near its rear.

Tips for Observing Caterpillars

Look for caterpillars on almost any plant. You may see them on leaves, twigs, bark, or flowers. Many are hard to spot because they hide from predators by camouflaging themselves, matching the color and pattern of a plant. Others are brightly colored to warn that they're poisonous. **BE CAREFUL:** Look but don't touch unless an expert says it's ok. Caterpillars that are spiny or hairy can hurt you.



1



As a grownup, I still have black and yellow spots and stripes.

Match the Caterpillar with the Adult Moth or Butterfly



2



Look for the white "moon" shapes on the wings of my adult form.

3



My bright colors warn predators that I'm poisonous, and when I grow up, I'll warn them with even brighter colors!

a



Cecropia Moth

b



Black Swallowtail Butterfly

c



Monarch Butterfly

Make an Egg carton Caterpillar

Grab a cardboard egg carton and have an adult help you cut out a strip of 6 cups. Flip the cups over and paint the outside—remember, caterpillars come in many colors and often have spots or stripes, so you can be creative! When the paint is dry, draw a face on one of the end cups. Try adding pipe cleaner antennae or make construction paper leaves for your caterpillar to munch on.



ready, set,

Go Outside!

