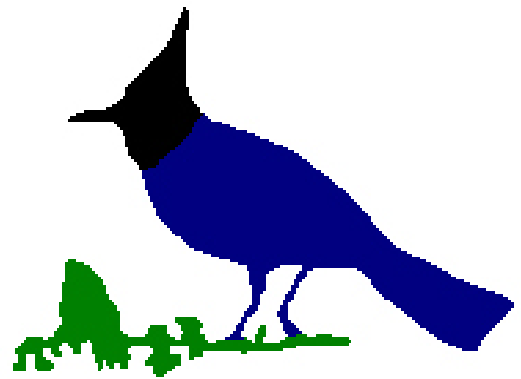


# Nature Notes

## Butterflies



It is interesting that most of us do not consider butterflies as a bug but indeed they are the most beautiful of insects. There are at least forty different butterflies that call the KNP home.

The life cycle of a butterfly, called a complete metamorphosis, consists of four stages:

(1) The egg (2) larva or caterpillar (3) pupa or chrysalis (4) adult butterfly. The eggs are usually laid on plants with each species having its own host plant or plants. The butterfly actually glues the eggs to the leaf. The egg hatches into a caterpillar that spends most of its time eating plant leaves and matures through several stages called instars. When the larva (or caterpillar) is fully grown it searches for a place to transform into a pupa, usually the underside of a leaf. From this chrysalis the adult butterfly emerges. Before a butterfly can fly, it needs some time to inflate its wings with blood and let the wings dry and unfold.

Adult butterflies have four wings, a fore-wing and hind-wing on each side. The wings are covered with tiny scales which produce the coloration people find attractive. As adults, butterflies consume only nectar from flowers which is sucked through their proboscis. They also sip water from damp patches or puddles.

One of the butterflies we see in the KNP is the Canadian Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio Canadensis*) This bright yellow butterfly uses willows and aspens as its host plants. The caterpillar is large and bright green with four yellow dots and two false eyes with bluish centers. The adult emerges from the chrysalis in May and flies until July. They only produce one brood a year. Watch for them around woodland edges where puddles form.



*Photo by Provincial Museum of Alberta*

Butterflies have a tendency to fly away before they can be identified but using binoculars works well for watching them

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