



*BATIQUITOS LAGOON
FOUNDATION*

INSECTS

BUTTERFLIES

The members of this group have membranous, often colorful wings which are largely covered by scales, sucking mouth parts, and long slender antennae knobbed at the tip. The larvae of butterflies are called caterpillars. Many caterpillars are clothed with hairs or spines and look quite menacing to frighten and discourage potential predators. Most caterpillars feed on the foliage of plants, and, consequently, some are serious pests of cultivated plants. Adults, however, feed nondestructively, on the nectar of flowers.



Some of the largest and most colorful butterflies in our area are **Swallowtails**. The lower wings of swallowtails have a tail-like projection. One of the largest is the Tiger Swallowtail, which is brightly colored with yellow and black. The principal food plant of this species is sycamores, but larvae also feed on willows. The Anise Swallowtail is mostly black with some yellow. The larvae feed on a variety of plant species in the carrot family, especially fennel. Another large black and yellow butterfly is the Orange Dog. Its host plant is citrus.



Monarch Butterflies are large orange butterflies with black markings. They are one of the few kinds of butterflies in the U.S. that migrate. During the fall, adults fly south from throughout western North America to overwinter on the Pacific coast, from Monterey south to Mexico. Only a few sites in California support great concentrated numbers of the overwintering adults. In the spring, one-by-one, the adults leave their overwintering sites and move north along the central valleys and east into the desert and mountain areas to lay their eggs. After that, the 6-9 month old adults die. Several generations usually pass before the cold weather prompts another southward migration. Milkweeds are the food plant of this species. Monarchs found east of the Rockies migrate to central Mexico each fall.



Painted Ladies are medium-sized butterflies that are darkish in color. They are reputed to be the most widely distributed butterfly because the thistles, nettles, lupines, and fiddlenecks, which the larvae feed on, are also widely distributed. In southern California, Painted Ladies can be found in all months of the year in the deserts and in the spring through fall in the coastal and montane regions, as well.



Pigmy Blues are tiny butterflies with delicate blue wings. There are many of them in the southern California lowlands but they are often unnoticed because of their small size. The larvae feed on various species of saltbush.



Southern Blues are another type of blue butterfly. The males have blue wings with a dark band along the margins of the wings. The females have blue wings with larger dark bands. The underside of the females wings is whitish with dark spots. It is abundant in southern California west of the mountain ranges. The larvae feed on deerweed.



Cabbage Butterflies are very common medium-sized white butterflies. They are not native to the U.S., having been introduced from Europe in the mid-1800's. They now range over the entire northern hemisphere since the (green) caterpillars feed on cabbage and other members of the mustard family, including wild mustard.



Orange-Tips are medium-sized white butterflies with orange tips on their front wings and greenish mottling on the undersides of their wings. The larvae feed on wild mustard and wild radish. These are among the first butterflies we see in the spring.