

## Pollinator Spotlight: Butterflies

Butterflies are very active during the day and visit a variety of wildflowers. Butterflies are less efficient than bees at moving pollen between plants. Highly perched on their long thin legs, they do not pick up much pollen on their bodies and lack specialized structures for collecting it.

Butterflies probe for nectar, their flight fuel, and typically favor the flat, clustered flowers that provide a landing pad and abundant rewards. Butterflies have good vision but a weak sense of smell. Unlike bees, butterflies can see red.

Butterflies typically visit flowers that are:

- In clusters and provide landing platforms
- Brightly colored (red, yellow, orange)
- Open during the day
- Ample nectar producers, with nectar deeply hidden
- Nectar guides present
- May be clusters of small flowers (goldenrods, Spirea)

Many butterflies produce scents that attract the opposite sex. Many of these scents often smell like the flowers that they are attracted to and visit. The scent of these butterfly-pollinated flowers might have evolved as an adaptation that made use of the existing attractiveness of these scents.

- Butterflies are found on every continent but Antarctica.
- Butterflies taste with their feet.

Many insects cannot feed on the sap of milkweeds. The caterpillars of the milkweed butterflies (Danaidae) – e.g., the monarch butterfly – feed on the leaves of milkweed plants. The milky juice of the plant, once ingested, makes the caterpillars and the adult butterflies distasteful to birds and other predators. Some butterflies like the viceroy butterfly are not milkweed eaters but they mimic the color and patterns of the distasteful milkweed butterflies to utilize this strategy for survival.



Monarch larva feeding on milkweed. [Monarch Monitoring Project](#).