

PAINTED LADY MIGRATION

THE PARTS OF A PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY

Vanessa cardui



FOREWING

Provides lift and steering in flight. Bold patterns help with camouflage and dispersion.

COMPOUND EYE

Made up of thousands of tiny lenses giving wide vision.

PROBOSCIS

Long, coiled tube used for sucking nectar from flowers.



QUICK FACTS

Wingspan: 4.5 – 6.5 cm
Family: Nymphalidae
Habitat: Gardens, meadows, grasslands and coasts
Range: Worldwide migrant



ANTENNAE

Thin, clubbed tips help detect smells and maintain balance.

HEAD

Contains the eyes, antennae and proboscis.

WING PATTERNS

Orange, black, white and brown markings help with camouflage and species recognition.



SCALES

Tiny, overlapping scales cover the wings, creating colour and pattern.

HINDWING

Smaller than the forewing. Used for propulsion and balance in flight.

THORAX

Muscular middle section that powers the wings and legs.

LEGS (3 PAIRS)

Used for walking, gripping surfaces and sensing the environment.

ABDOMEN

Houses digestive, reproductive and other vital organs.

UNDERSIDE OF HINDWING

The underside is cryptically patterned with eye-spots to confuse predators.



THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY

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1. EGG

Females lay tiny, cream-coloured eggs singly on the leaves of host plants (thistles, mallow, nettles and others).



2. CATERPILLAR (LARVA)

The egg hatches in 3–7 days. The caterpillar grows through five larval instars, feeding voraciously on leaves.



3. PUPA (CHRYSALIS)

The full-grown caterpillar attaches itself by a silk pad and forms a chrysalis. This stage lasts 7–14 days.



4. ADULT EMERGES

The adult butterfly emerges from the chrysalis, its wings soft and crumpled at first. It pumps fluid into the wings to expand and strengthen them, then rests to dry.



5. ADULT BUTTERFLY

The Painted Lady is ready to fly! Adults feed on nectar from many flowers. They mate, and females lay eggs, beginning the cycle again.



KEY FACTS



Painted Lady butterflies migrate long distances between seasons.



Several generations occur each year in warmer regions.



Host plants include thistles, mallow, hollyhock, nettles and many more.



Butterflies are most often seen from spring to autumn.

From egg to adult: usually 4–6 weeks, depending on temperature and food availability.

HOW A MALE PAINTED LADY FERTILISES A FEMALE'S EGG

The life begins with a tiny act that ensures the next generation.



MALE
(left)

- 1** The male and female join at the tip of their abdomens.



FEMALE
(right)

- 2** THE MALE TRANSFERS A SPERM PACKAGE

The male everts (turns out) his scent organs called androconia and then extends his abdomen to expose the claspers.



He releases a sperm package (spermatophore) which is grasped by the female.

- 3** THE FEMALE STORES THE SPERM

The female pulls the sperm package into her body through the genital opening.



The sperm is stored in a sac called the spermatheca for later use.

- 4** EGGS ARE LAID

After mating, the female lays eggs singly on suitable host plants (thistles, mallows, nettles and other plants).



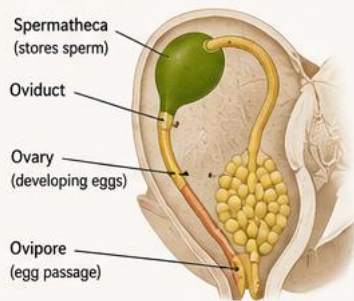
Each egg is carefully placed and stuck to the leaf surface with a tiny adhesive.

OVERVIEW

Mating usually takes place in sunny conditions. The pair remain joined for 30 minutes to several hours.

THE INTERNAL PATH

Sperm travels from the spermatheca down the oviduct to the developing egg in the ovary.



- 5** SPERM RELEASED TO FERTILISE THE EGG

When an egg enters the oviduct, sperm is released from the spermatheca.



- 6** FERTILISATION

A sperm penetrates the egg (ovum) and the nuclei fuse. The egg is now fertilised.



- 7** A NEW LIFE BEGINS

The fertilised egg passes out of the ovipore and is left on the leaf.



In 3–7 days (depending on temperature) the egg hatches and a caterpillar emerges.

KEY FACTS

- ♻ Males do not provide parental care.
- ♻ Females can store sperm for many days and use it to fertilise many eggs.
- ♻ A female may lay hundreds of eggs during her lifetime.
- ♻ The whole process ensures the next generation of Painted Lady butterflies.



The Painted Lady is a migratory butterfly. Successful reproduction wherever it goes ensures the continuation of this remarkable species.



