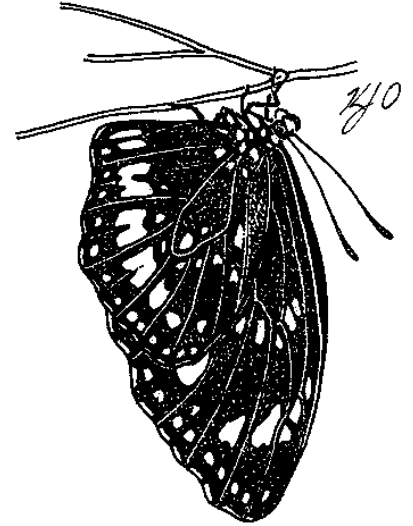


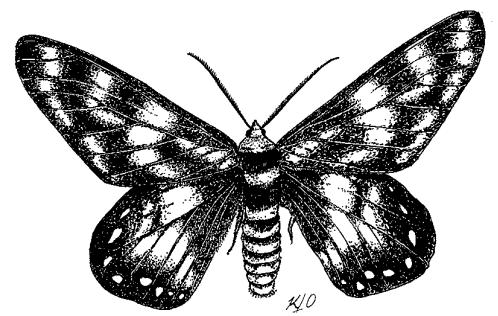
Tropical Factsheets

Moth or Butterfly?

- Butterflies and moths are a group of insects called **Lepidoptera** which means 'scale wings'.
- Like all insects, butterflies and moths have a head, thorax, abdomen, two antennae and six legs. Additionally, moths and butterflies have four wings that are almost always covered by coloured scales.
- There are some main differences between moths and butterflies.
- Generally butterflies are active by day, and moths fly by night.
- The antennae of a butterfly are almost always smooth and thin with a small knob on the end. The antennae of a moth vary greatly but are usually brush-like, feathery or pointed.
- A butterfly has a coiled proboscis for drinking liquids such as flower nectar, whereas a moth often does not. Moths generally don't eat as adults because they have done all their eating as caterpillars.
- A butterfly rests with its wings closed and a moth lands with them open.
- A butterfly forms a pupae hanging from branches. A moth forms a cocoon, usually on the ground.
- Many moths have a device called a **frenulum** to lock their wings together when they fly whereas butterflies don't.
- The male **Regent Skipper** which lives in the Wet Tropics, is black with yellow and blue markings, and is the only butterfly to lock its forewings and hindwings together during flight. These male butterflies are the most primitive of the world's butterflies! The females are more advanced because they have lost their frenulums.
- The **Four O'clock Moth** is a bright day-flying moth which is sometimes mistaken for a butterfly. It has a fat yellow body and dark purple wings with scaleless, transparent 'windows' and bright yellow spots on its hindwings.
- A few species of moths are a nuisance because their larvae feed on clothes, stored grains and crops, but most moths are completely harmless.



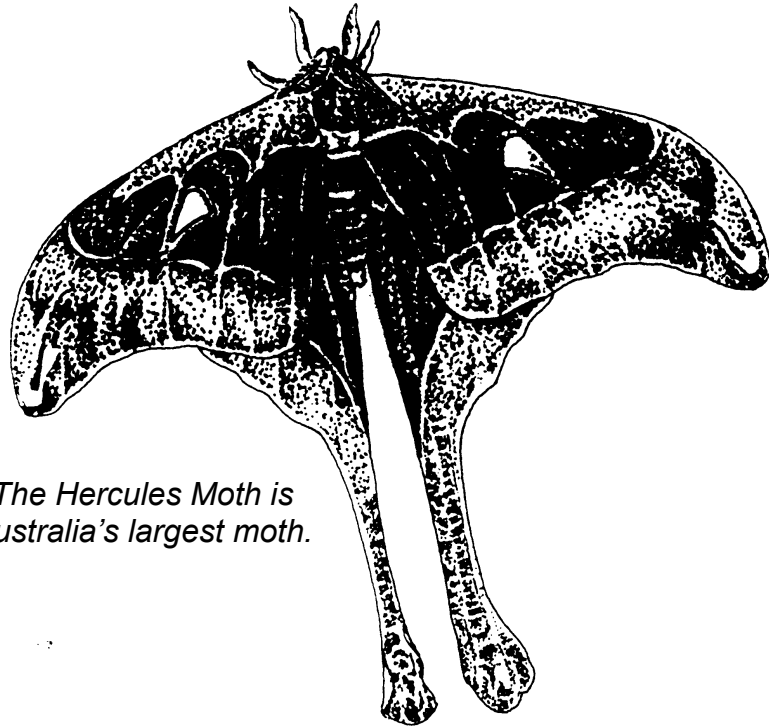
Butterflies rest with their wings closed.



Moths land with their wings open.



- Many moths are important plant pollinators.
- A few species of moths have been very useful in controlling the spread of weeds. One type of moth has destroyed large areas of Prickly Pear.
- Another type of moth is used to control the water weed, Water Hyacinth.
- The largest Australian Moth is the **Hercules Moth** and it lives in the tropical rainforests.
- It has a wing span of about 25cm.
- The males are smaller than the females.
- They are brown with tapering tail-like hind wings.
- The female Hercules produces chemicals to attract males. The males detect the female's scent with their long antennae.
- After mating, the female lays about 90 eggs on the leaves or stems of about seven different types of rainforest trees, which are the caterpillars' food plants.
- The females die after laying their eggs as they have no mouth parts and are unable to feed. They can only live as long as their fat deposits last.
- The blue-green caterpillars grow up to 10 cm long before they spin cocoons.



The Hercules Moth is Australia's largest moth.