

## Queen Alexandra's Birdwing Butterfly

### Where Do We Live?

Queen Alexandra's Birdwing butterflies live in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea, an island off the northern coast of Australia.

### What Do We Look Like?

Queen Alexandra's Birdwing butterflies are insects. Like all insects, they have 3 body parts – **head**, **thorax**, and **abdomen**. They have 2 **compound eyes**, **antennae**, a **proboscis**, 6 legs, and **wings covered with scales**.

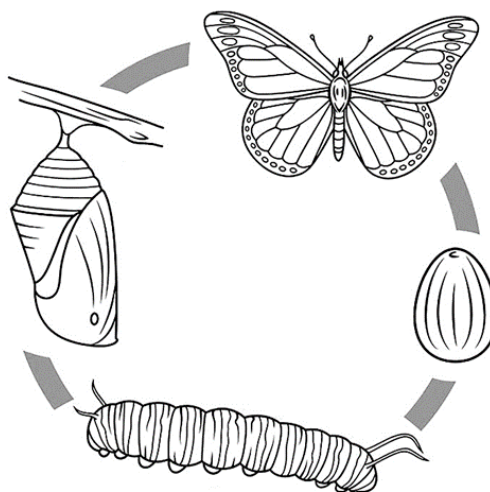
The female has rounded brown wings with white spots with a patch of red fur on its brown thorax. The male has slimmer blue-green wings with a black stripe, a blue-green underside with black veins. Both have a bright yellow abdomen.

### How Do We Grow?

There are 4 stages in the lifecycle: **egg**, **larva** (caterpillar), **pupa** (chrysalis), and **adult**.

1. The egg is laid only on a species of pipevine plant.
2. When it hatches, the larva will eat its own nutritious egg shell and then start devouring the leaves of the plant. The larva will need to shed its skin several times as it grows, this is called **instar**.
3. When the larva is ready, it makes a thick skin which becomes the pupa. Inside the pupa, or chrysalis, the body of the caterpillar breaks down into a blob of cells and then reforms, using instructions from its DNA, into an adult. This process is called **metamorphosis** and can take up to a month to complete.
4. The adult butterfly will emerge from its chrysalis in the early morning when it is most humid.

Label the lifecycle



### **What Do We Eat?**

A pipevine is the primary plant that larvae eat. Adults will use their proboscis, which is a long straw-like tongue, to drink nectar. Hibiscus flowers are large enough to support the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing.

### **What Are Our Natural Enemies?**

The orb weaving spider and several types of small birds are the only natural enemies of the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing. The pipevine plant that the larvae feed on is poisonous, so it is thought that the adult butterflies are also poisonous.

### **Did You Know?**

- They are named for Queen Alexandra of England.
- The Queen Alexandra's Birdwing is the **largest** butterfly on the planet.
- Queen Alexandra's Birdwings are in the swallowtail family of butterflies.
- Queen Alexandra's Birdwings are **rare** because they are only found in one area of Papua New Guinea.
- Queen Alexandra's Birdwing butterflies are very strong fliers and fly high up in the forests.
- Females' bodies are 3 inches long and have a wingspan of 10 inches.
- Queen Alexandra's Birdwings are **diurnal** or active during the day.
- In order to be strong enough to fly, the adult butterfly will pump its wings after emerging from the pupa to get fluid moving through its veins.
- Human activity has had a devastating effect on the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing. Collecting and deforestation have caused a decline in the population.
- The Queen Alexandra's Birdwing is considered endangered.
- The larva is black with a cream-colored spot in the middle of its body and is covered in red tubercles, wart-like growths.

Label the photos below  
Head Thorax Eyes Abdomen Antennae Female Male

