

The Project Approach to Learning at

RisingOaks
Early Learning | St. Nicholas

Project Name: Butterflies

Age Group: Summer Camp (4.7 yrs – 8.6 yrs)

Project Start Date: July 4, 2023

Project End Date: August 24, 2023



RisingOaks
Early Learning

Growing minds through play

Background

The project we decided to work on was about butterflies. The children that participated were 4.7 years old to 8.6 years old. This topic was explored during the months of July and August 2023. The educators that were involved were Syreeta, Shrishti, Isabella and Janeth.



Phase 1: Beginning the Project

The project started through a provocation set up by the educators in the classroom. We set up an interest table about insects. The interest table housed some of the great living insects outside, but only in plastic toy form. We had cards with descriptions about each insect and a matching picture which the children enjoyed using as a matching game with the plastic bugs. We had a nice moth on the interest table and some of the children were curious to know, "Is it a moth or a butterfly?" We talked about differences that we knew and some of the children asked where the butterfly is, and why we didn't have one on table. We talked about seeing them outside in the summer months. We asked the children what they knew about butterflies and what they wanted to know. We made pictures and other crafts of how we thought a butterfly looked like before we saw one in real life. We also discussed who could teach us about butterflies, and created a chart with our questions.



What do we know about Butterflies?

- Ethan: They come from a cocoon.
- Leah: Butterflies come from eggs. They taste with their feet. Butterflies are delicate.
- Lucas: Butterflies have wings.
- Alexandra: They fly.
- Lilyanna: They drink nectar.
- Elyse: They go through a metamorphosis.
- Anjali: Butterflies land with their wings in.
- Ethan B.: We know there are Monarch and painted Lady butterflies.
- Jacob: Butterflies drink nectar from a straw attached to their bodies.

What do we want to know?

- Leah: Do butterflies have a good sense of smell and taste?
- Maya: How long does it take for a caterpillar to turn into a butterfly?
- Caleb: Do butterflies have good vision?
- Lilyanna and Ethan B.: How long do butterflies fly in the air?
- Catherine: Why do butterflies have spots on their wings?
- Geetan: How do butterflies make their cocoon?
- Jacob: Where do butterflies live? Do butterfly trees exist?
- Lucas: How are boy butterflies different from girl ones? Do boys have eggs?
- Aqueel: Why do butterflies have triangular wings?

How can we find the answers to our questions?

1. Google
2. Videos
3. Books
4. Ask an expert
5. Teachers
6. Other children
7. Participating in activities

Phase 2: Developing the Project

First and second drawings: we used our imagination to make butterfly representations.
Children making coffee filter butterflies:



Educator Janeth shared her pictures of butterflies she took from a museum in the States. This allowed us to observe the different types of butterflies and spark more questions and creativity.



Learning about butterfly senses: After making some delicious lemonade, we used straws to sip our drink like a butterfly would sip their nectar from flowers. We learned that some bugs have a proboscis attached to their bodies to drink nectar.



Throughout our research, we learned some butterflies have symmetrical sides. Finding this information interesting, we used paint and loose parts to create our own representations of symmetrical butterflies:



Exploring a butterfly on our playground:



During outdoor play, the children used their observation skills and spotted a butterfly fluttering around. This created excitement and they began to follow and see where it was going. There were conversations of wonder as the children made educated guesses as to where the butterfly was trying to go and if it was potentially looking for its home.

The conversations and sharing of ideas, while keeping the volume down to not scare the butterfly was a challenge that the children were able to do with success. They used observation skills, worked together, and listened to one another creating a sense of belonging amongst all. This exploration led to us consistently:

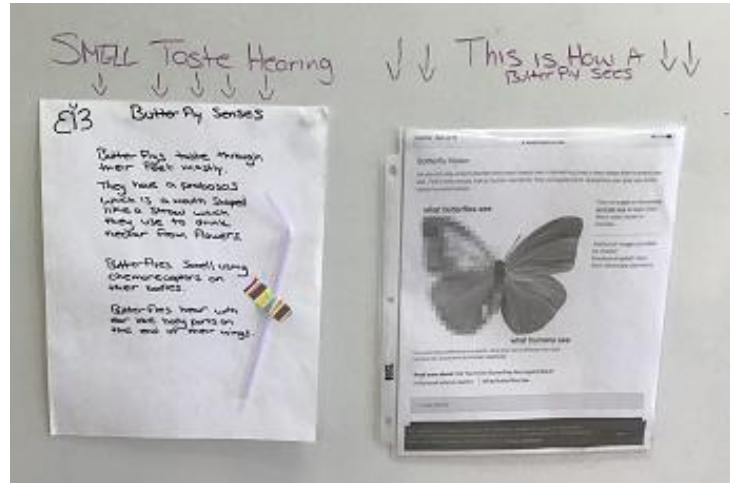
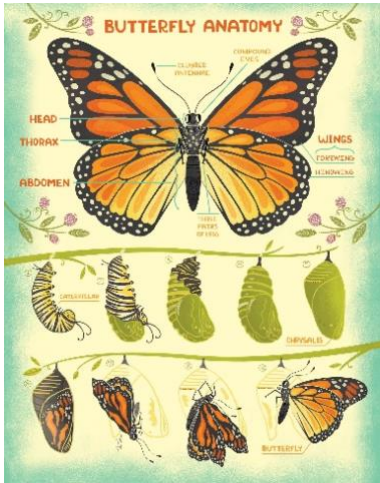
Walk through parks looking for insects and butterflies. Below is a picture of a butterfly that we were so proud of finding on our field trip to Rockwood.



To further explore some of our questions, the educators provided an interest table about the lifecycle of a butterfly for the children to investigate:



Learning about the lifecycle of a caterpillar/chrysalis and how it emerges into a butterfly after 2 weeks, a butterfly's way of drinking nectar from plants, and their vision through research. This answered more of our questions.



The children had the opportunity to look through “butterfly glasses,” (butterflies have compound eyes) to experience how they see the world, and learn about monarchs and milkweed plants through a butterfly conservatory presentation where they gave us the opportunity to ask the many questions we had about butterflies, and explore the new vocabulary we had learned in a personal manner. Some of our answered questions:

Are male and female butterflies different? “Yes, they have different markings.”

Are butterfly trees real? “When monarchs fly south, they may attach in hundreds to a specific pine tree in Mexico and to us it looks like the leaves of these plants are made of butterflies.” We thought this was so neat.

We also learned that “The triangular shape of their wings helps them to fly and they rest when they are tired.” The butterfly glasses were a great way to experience how a butterfly sees the world around them.





The children also engaged in exploring a sensory bin that reenacts a butterfly's way of pollinating (the butterfly lands on a flower, drinks nectar, pollen attaches to the legs, flies to different flower, deposits pollen, drinks nectar from another flower and they repeat the process).



Butterfly Video:

We watched an educational video displaying the shedding of the chrysalis and the butterfly emerging from it. We watched what goes on at a chrysalis farm (several chrysalises hanging from the roof and walls of a cabin and hundreds of caterpillars eating through milk weed leaves). Children observed and expressed how they thought the shedding of the chrysalis was very much like a snake shedding its skin, as well as making other connections with nature.



Vocabulary Learned:

Pollination, Proboscis, Nectar, Monarch butterfly, Cocoon vs chrysalis , Milk weed



Phase 3: Concluding the Project

In conclusion we learned a lot about butterflies through books, the internet, drawings, nature, and the butterfly conservatory presentation. It went very well and all the participants enjoyed the project.

To end the summer, we had a challenge sent out by our camp coordinators; to wrap a teacher or child up and send them the results. The children decided to vote amongst the four educators and Brooke, a volunteer that had been with us on field trips throughout the summer. After the voting process, Brooke was the chosen one. As the children worked together with the different materials provided to

wrap her up, there was a large piece of paper that was taped on her back. One of the children said, "Those look like wings." With this statement, someone else said, "Like butterfly wings. Brooke, you can be a butterfly." Everyone became very excited at this idea. Wrapping her up allowed the children to engage in cooperation, discussing the direction of how to wrap her, practice turn taking and use their collaborative creativity. Once, Brooke the butterfly was complete, the children challenged her to try to walk (and fly). The excitement in their voices and laughter as they observed Brooke try to walk with their masterpiece was a fantastic way to end our summer Butterfly project.



Teacher Reflections

Syreeta- Our project was wonderful and very free flow. If children had questions that they wanted answered they would ask me, and we would write them down and find out. The children enjoyed the interactive games about butterflies. My favourite piece was finding a butterfly on the playground and taking pictures up-close of a real butterfly (The conservatory called our butterfly a painted lady type).

Shrishti- Our butterfly project sparked a lot of curiosity, where they were very keen on learning about the beautiful creatures inside the classroom and outside. We were able to provide the children with educational videos and engaging provocations to foster that learning. One of the best take-aways of this project was that each camp week, the willingness to keep learning in nature and within the classroom kept the campers extremely engaged.

Janeth-I observed how the interest and excitement of the camp children who were with us for all or most of the summer, was contagious for the children who attended one or a few weeks. The cooperation and collaborative inquiry between children and educators were some of the things that struck me, and being a co-learner along the way made this project a success. My favourite part was the final challenge where the whole class participated, ending our project with a fun activity that allowed for so much learning.