

Peacock Butterfly Fact Sheet

Common Name: Peacock Butterfly
Scientific Name: *Aglais io*
German Name: Tagpfauenauge

Description: The beautiful peacock butterfly (*Inachis io*) is a well-known and instantly recognizable species thanks to its unique patterning. The stunning eyespots, which earn this species its common name, frighten predators, or divert birds from attacking the body. In stark contrast to the brightly colored upper surfaces, the undersides of the wings are dull brown. The sexes are similar in appearance, but females are slightly larger. The caterpillar, which grows to 4.2 centimeters in length, has a black, spine-covered body freckled with fine white spots.

Wingspan: 5.5 - 6 cm

Biology: Usually one generation is produced each year. Its host plant is the common nettle. Females lay eggs in groups underneath nettle leaves during May, after around two weeks the eggs hatch. The caterpillars live in groups, protected by a web of silk, before dispersing to pupate, hanging underneath vegetation. The adults emerge around two weeks later in late July. They gather together at sources of nectar, building up reserves to see them through hibernation, which usually begins in September and occurs in hollow trees and other refuges, including attics, garages, and sheds. They do not mate until the following year, emerging from hibernation as early as February, with peak emergence occurring in April. Males defend territories in sunny locations, and chase any females that pass by. If threatened they can produce a hissing sound created by rubbing the veins on their forewings and hindwings together – this is audible even to the human ear.

Habitat: Peacock butterflies occur in a wide range of habitats, and are familiar garden visitors. The adults prefer to feed in open areas in woodlands, and breeding habitat typically consists of large patches of nettles (*Urtica dioica*), in sunny areas sheltered by woodland or hedges.

Diet: Caterpillars: leaves of common nettle.

Adults: nectar from a variety of plants including thistle, betony, bluebell, blackberry, lavender, phlox, cuckooflower, dandelion, teasel, butterfly bush, etc.

Range: Occurs throughout Germany and much of temperate Europe, extending northwards to southern Scandinavia, but is absent from many areas of the extreme south. The peacock butterfly also occurs in Asia, reaching Japan.

Threats: Destruction of habitat, especially common nettle removal. Use of pesticides and herbicides for agricultural purposes.

Resources: <http://www.arkive.org/peacock-butterfly/inachis-io/>
<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/trees-woods-and-wildlife/animals/butterflies/peacock/>



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Butterfly Caterpillar Matchup

Each butterfly was once a caterpillar. Each species of butterfly has its own unique caterpillar.

1. The peacock butterfly caterpillar is black and spiky with many white dots.
2. The brimstone butterfly caterpillar is quite simply green.
3. The dovetail butterfly caterpillar with its black and orange spots is quite striking.
4. The little fox butterfly caterpillar is black and hairy with two green strips.

Match the caterpillar with the butterfly!



Peacock butterfly



Dovetail butterfly



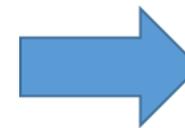
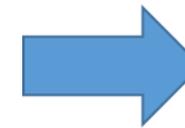
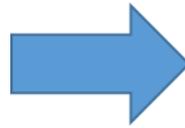
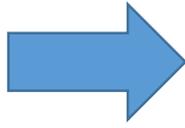
Brimstone butterfly



Little fox butterfly

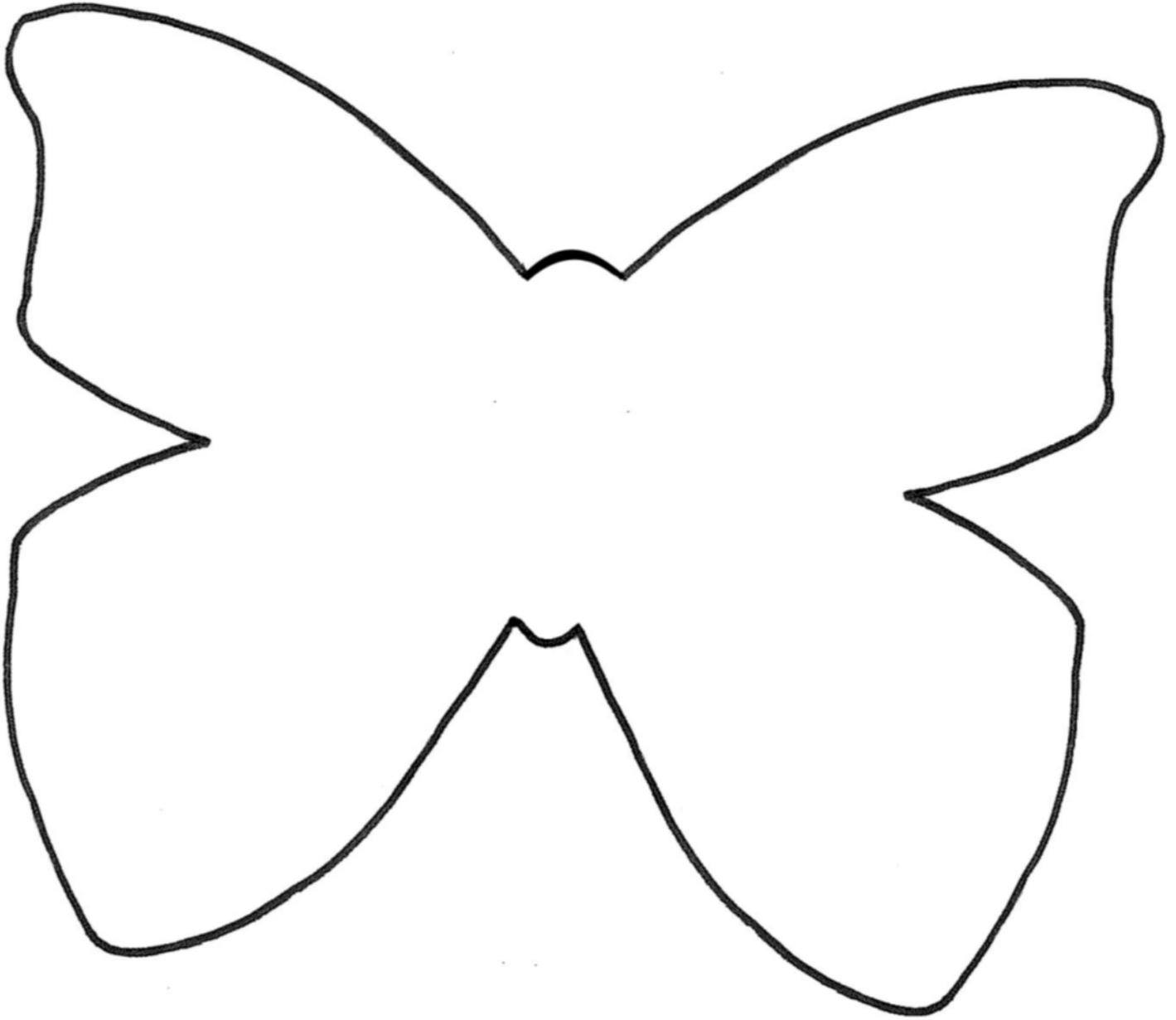


Butterfly Matching Key



Peacock Butterfly Masks

1. Have your students create a butterfly mask from the outline.



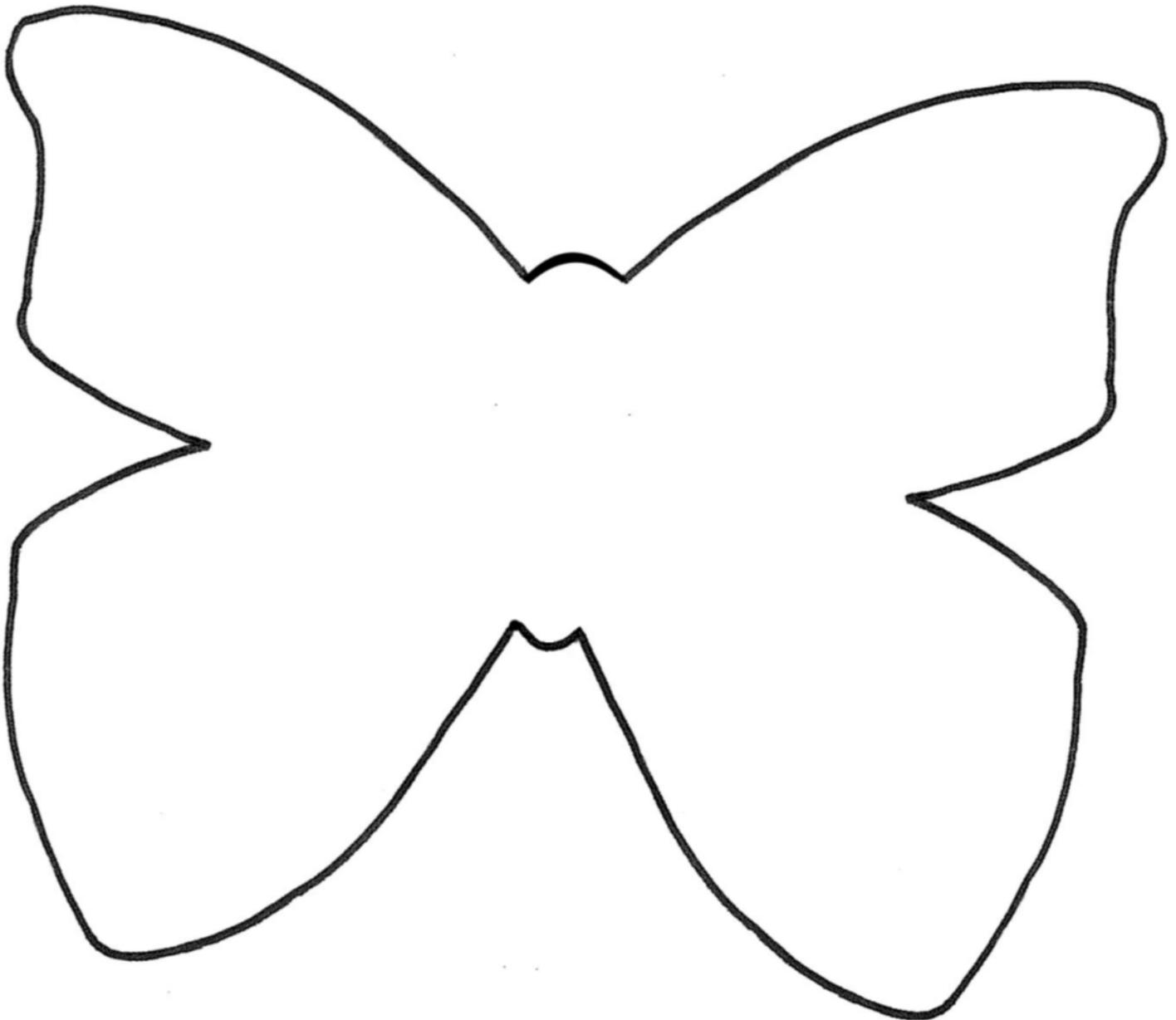
Butterfly Camouflage

Camouflage is a defense or tactic that organisms use to disguise their appearance, usually to blend in with their surroundings. Organisms use camouflage to mask their location, identity, and movement. This allows prey to avoid predators, and for predators to sneak up on prey.

Peacock butterflies use camouflage to protect themselves from predators that want to eat them.

Look at one upside-down as it basks in the morning sun and imagine for a moment that you're a potential predator, a mouse perhaps. Suddenly those piercing spots really do look like eyes, while the butterfly's body becomes a beak, and the tips of its hindwings morph into owl-like ears. You're staring down a rather scary enemy – especially if the peacock starts hissing at you, a trick it pulls by rubbing its wings together. All in all, you're probably going to look elsewhere for your lunch.

Create your own camouflaged butterfly! What habitat does it live in? Who are its predators?



Butterfly Gardens

Here is a list of plants that butterflies feed on. Other pollinators such as bees, flies, and wasps love them too!

Native Species

- Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) – a food source for peacock butterfly caterpillars
- Arnica (*Arnica montana*)
- Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)
- Eryngo (*Eryngium ssp.*)
- Sedum (*Sedum ssp.*)
- Lychnis (*Lychnis grandiflora*)
- Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)
- Mallow (*Malva ssp.*)
- Dianthus (*Dianthus ssp.*)
- Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)
- Forget-Me-Nots (*Myosotis ssp.*)
- Pansies & Violas (*Viola ssp.*)
- Willow (*Salix ssp.*)

Garden Species - these are non-native plants in Germany

- Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*)
- Starflower (*Borago officinalis*)
- Dahlia (*Dahlia variabilis*)
- Common Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)
- Fuchsia (*Fuchsia ssp.*)
- Crocus (*Crocus vernus*)
- Cress (*Tropaeolum majus*)
- Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)
- Lavender (*Lavendula ssp.*)
- Phlox (*Phlox ssp.*)
- Petunia (*Petunia ssp.*)
- Larkspur (*Delphinium ssp.*)
- Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja ssp.*)