

Nature Notes

Mourning Cloak

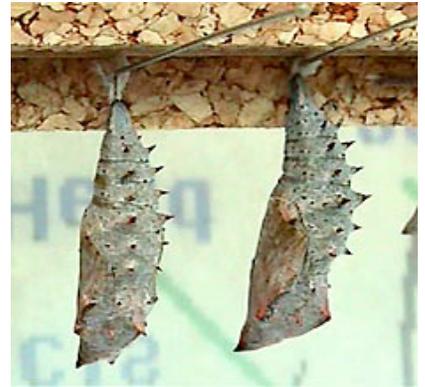


Butterflies go through 4 distinct life stages - from egg to larvae to chrysalis to adult. The eggs of the Mourning Cloak butterfly are small spheres found clustered on twigs of host trees such as willows, cottonwoods and aspens. The caterpillars that emerge from the eggs



feed on the host trees, sometimes causing great damage.

Feeding voraciously, a caterpillar goes through 5 larval stages, or instars, shedding its skin 4 times before finding a spot to attach it's hind end to a small silk anchor pad, hang upside down and



Caterpillar Photo: Wikipedia shed it's skin one last time. The outer surface of the body hardens into a chrysalis then, in 10-15 days, the adult butterfly emerges, inflates and dries it's wings and flies off as an adult.

Chrysalis Photo: Wikipedia

The Mourning Cloak butterfly (*Nymphalis antiopa*) is not only one of the most recognizable butterflies but also one of the longest living ones, surviving for up to 10 months. It manages to survive the winter



Adult Photo: Kymi

as a hibernating adult, finding refuge in sheltered spots such as tree cavities or under loose bark.

Soon after emerging from hibernation in early spring, the males perch in sunny openings waiting for receptive females.

After mating, females lay eggs in bunches on host trees and shortly thereafter, both male and female adults die while the eggs go on to hatch as caterpillars.

Watch for these distinctive, beautiful fliers in many areas of the Kimberley Nature Park as the days warm up after our Kootenay winter.

Visit www.kimberleynaturepark.ca for a hard copy or more information about Nature Park events.