

What time of the year does Foothill Park have the most butterflies?

A best guess for butterfly spotting in Foothills Park would be late spring into early summer. Without being butterfly species specific it is almost impossible to guess. Adult butterflies may live for a week or two or nearly a full year, larva may be around for days or weeks, pupa may even stay dormant over one or more winters.

Adult butterflies lay eggs on plants, each species having a specific plant host. Most eggs last only a few weeks but some species lay eggs close to winter and the egg may over winter, hatching only in spring.

Butterfly larva, or caterpillars, are basically just eating machines. They spend nearly all their time searching out and eating food. Most butterfly larva eat leaves or other plant material, some eat insects. Caterpillars grow up in a series of stages, during the last stage their wing patterns start to develop.

When the larva is fully developed, it stops eating and finds a place to form a chrysalis (usually on the underside of a leaf). After a final molt, the chrysalis is formed and the pupae begins turning into a butterfly. Carefully watching a chrysalis over time will allow you to see the transformation occurring inside.

When the adult butterfly is fully developed, it breaks free of the chrysalis. It takes some time for an adult butterfly to be ready to fly. It can take hours for the butterfly's wings to become fully extended, dry and have blood flowing through them. Until the wings are ready a butterfly is very vulnerable to predators. Please do not handle butterflies that are drying their wings.