

Photo Description



A beautiful butterfly with black wings and yellow spots is sitting on a pink flower. The butterfly is using its long, thin tongue to drink sweet nectar from the flower's center. The flower has bright pink petals around a yellow middle part.

Scientific Phenomena

This image captures the Anchoring Phenomenon of pollination - a mutualistic relationship between flowering plants and pollinators. The butterfly is feeding on nectar (a sugar-rich reward produced by the flower) while inadvertently picking up pollen grains on its body. When the butterfly visits the next flower, some of this pollen will transfer to the new flower's reproductive parts, enabling plant reproduction. This co-evolutionary relationship benefits both organisms: the butterfly receives food energy, and the plant achieves sexual reproduction through pollen transfer.

Core Science Concepts

1. Animal Needs and Survival: Butterflies need food (nectar) to survive and get energy to fly, grow, and reproduce.
2. Plant Reproduction: Flowers make nectar to attract animals that will help move pollen from one flower to another.
3. Interdependence: The butterfly and flower help each other - the butterfly gets food and the flower gets help making seeds.
4. Animal Structures and Functions: The butterfly's long proboscis (tongue) is perfectly designed to reach deep into flowers to drink nectar.

Pedagogical Tip:

Use hand motions to help students remember the pollination process: have them pretend to be butterflies "drinking" from flowers while "pollen" (yellow powder or confetti) sticks to their arms, then "fly" to another flower to transfer it.

UDL Suggestions:

Provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding: drawing the pollination process, acting it out with props, or creating a simple comic strip showing the butterfly and flower interaction.

Zoom In / Zoom Out

Zoom In: At the microscopic level, tiny pollen grains are sticking to the butterfly's fuzzy body parts, legs, and antennae. These pollen grains contain male plant cells that will combine with female plant cells to create seeds.

Zoom Out: This single butterfly-flower interaction is part of a larger ecosystem where many different pollinators (bees, butterflies, birds, bats) visit thousands of flowers, helping entire plant communities reproduce and create food webs that support all living things.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice about the butterfly's mouth parts and how might they help it get food? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
2. How do you think the flower and butterfly help each other? (Bloom's: Understand | DOK: 2)
3. What might happen to the flowers if all the butterflies disappeared from this area? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
4. How is a butterfly's tongue similar to and different from a straw? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)

Potential Student Misconceptions

1. Misconception: "The butterfly is eating the flower."

Clarification: The butterfly is only drinking liquid nectar from inside the flower, not eating or damaging the flower parts.

2. Misconception: "Flowers make nectar just to be nice to butterflies."

Clarification: Flowers make nectar as a "payment" to attract animals that will help them reproduce by moving pollen.

3. Misconception: "All insects hurt plants."

Clarification: Many insects like butterflies, bees, and beetles actually help plants by moving pollen between flowers.

Cross-Curricular Ideas

1. Math - Counting and Patterns: Students can count the spots on the butterfly's wings and look for repeating patterns. They could create their own butterfly with a specific number of spots on each wing, then add them together to practice addition skills.
2. ELA - Descriptive Writing: Have students write or dictate sentences describing what they see in the photo using sensory words (pink, soft, sweet-smelling, delicate). They could create a simple story about a butterfly's day visiting different flowers, sequencing events with beginning, middle, and end.
3. Art - Nature Collage: Students can create butterflies and flowers using tissue paper, magazine cutouts, or painted paper. This hands-on activity reinforces the visual characteristics of butterflies and flowers while developing fine motor skills and artistic expression.
4. Social Studies - Habitats and Communities: Discuss where butterflies and flowers live together (gardens, meadows, parks). Students can explore how people can create butterfly gardens to help these important pollinators in their own communities and neighborhoods.

STEM Career Connection

1. Botanist - A botanist is a scientist who studies plants, including how flowers grow, what colors they are, and how they make seeds. Botanists might work in gardens, greenhouses, or laboratories to help plants grow healthy and strong. They learn all about flowers and how to take care of them.

- Average Annual Salary: \$63,000

2. Entomologist - An entomologist is a scientist who studies insects, including butterflies, bees, and beetles. They learn about what insects eat, how they live, and how they help or hurt plants and people. Some entomologists work to protect butterflies and help them survive in nature.

- Average Annual Salary: \$67,000

3. Pollinator Biologist/Conservation Scientist - These scientists study pollinators like butterflies and bees to understand how they help plants and ecosystems stay healthy. They work to protect pollinators by creating safe habitats and teaching people why these animals are so important for growing food and beautiful gardens.

- Average Annual Salary: \$65,000

NGSS Connections

Performance Expectation: 2-LS2-2: Develop a simple model that mimics the function of an animal in dispersing seeds or pollinating plants.

Disciplinary Core Ideas:

- 2-LS2.A - Animals depend on plants for food
- 2-LS4.D - There are many different kinds of living things in different areas

Crosscutting Concepts:

- Structure and Function - The butterfly's proboscis structure allows it to function as a nectar-drinking tool
- Systems and System Models - The pollination system shows how living things interact

Science Vocabulary

- * Nectar: Sweet liquid that flowers make to attract animals like butterflies and bees.
- * Pollen: Tiny yellow powder made by flowers that helps plants make seeds.
- * Pollination: When pollen moves from one flower to another flower to help make seeds.
- * Proboscis: The long, tube-like tongue that butterflies use to drink nectar.
- * Petals: The colorful parts of a flower that attract pollinators.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- The Magic School Bus Plants Seeds by Joanna Cole
- From Seed to Plant by Gail Gibbons
- The Reason for a Flower by Ruth Heller