



The important role of butterflies and moths in nature

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- Caterpillars play an important role in nature as food for other animals
- A large number of animals eat butterfly and moth caterpillars:
 - ❖ Insects
 - ❖ Spiders
 - ❖ Frogs and toads
 - ❖ Lizards
 - ❖ Birds
 - ❖ Small mammals like hedgehogs
- This makes moth and butterfly caterpillars an important part of the **food chain** in the habitats in which they live
- A food chain describes the order in which living things depend on each other for food



- Most food chains start with living things that make their own food, like plants
- ❖ Scientists call them **producers**
- Scientists call living things that eat other living things **consumers**
- ❖ A moth and butterfly caterpillar that eats a plant is called a **primary consumer**
- ❖ Animal predators, like birds, that eat prey like caterpillars are called **secondary consumers**
- ❖ An animal that eats the bird (e.g. a bird of prey or a fox) would be called a **tertiary consumer**
- Each consumer in the food chain needs the energy from their food in order to grow and survive



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- In UK, we record the number of butterflies each year to tell us how healthy the environment is
- ❖ If the number of butterflies becomes smaller, the habitat is less 'healthy' and less butterflies have been able to live there successfully (survive)
- A drop in the numbers of butterflies affects the animals in the rest of the food chain
- ❖ Butterflies and moths are useful environmental indicators, and are called **indicator species**

