



Keeping & Releasing Painted Lady Butterflies

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THE PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY

Vanessa cardui, or the Painted Lady, is one of the most common butterflies in the world, populating all continents except Antarctica. In nature, the adults will lay eggs on thistles, mallows (including hollyhock), or another of its preferred caterpillar foods.

Their erratic migratory habitat and wide distribution ensure that released butterflies have a high rate of success, and are not detrimental to genetics in wild populations.

When butterflies are emerging, a small amount of red fluid, called **meconium**, is produced. Some of this may be present around your butterflies. This is not blood: meconium is a metabolic fluid used to help form body tissue and facilitate transformation inside the chrysalis. When no longer needed, remaining fluid is released.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE THEM

ARRIVAL:

Your butterflies have been packed with an ice pack to keep them cool. You can remove the ice pack and re-freeze it for later use, should you need to transport your butterflies again. Cool conditions will keep them calm and feeling safe, fooling them into thinking it is a chilly night, which is how this species survives stretches of cool weather in their northern range. To conserve energy, they enter a state of dormancy until temperatures are favourable.

STORING THEM:

The butterflies need to be kept cool and dark until you release them. Good temperatures are 8-15 degrees C, as stable as possible. They can go a bit lower, but no higher than 15. You can use a regular fridge to store them, as long as it is on its **WARMEST** setting (usually around 7 degrees). Wine coolers are great. We do not recommend garages or basements, as they are rarely as stable as a controlled fridge. Nor can they stay in the box with the melted ice pack.

NOTES:

It is important that your butterflies do not drop below 4°C; they may perish, or above 16-17 °C, as they will wake up in the box and panic.

Butterflies can stay in their boxes, in cool storage, for around 4-5 days safely. Please release them before then.

RELEASING YOUR BUTTERFLIES

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS:

For the butterflies to have a good chance of survival, temperatures should be minimum 18 Celsius (approx.), and full/partial sun.

Butterflies are creatures of sunlight, warmth and nectar, so you will find that they prefer the sunniest, most brightly lit part of the day, are attracted to flowers. Chances of them remaining near your release location will be increased if both host and nectar plants are in the area.

Consider the elements when you are planning: it is wise to prepare an alternative backup date, in case the weather is not agreeable on the original date of your release event.

They are ectothermic, meaning they cannot generate their own body heat: cold butterflies drop to the ground and are helpless.

THE RELEASE:

They don't take long to warm up: only a few minutes. Simply remove them from the cold place, or take the ice packs away, when you are ready. The butterflies will warm up very quickly, and you may see the little boxes beginning to shake as they clamber about, investigating an exit.

Simply open the top of the box in the sunlight, somewhere outside. When they are sufficiently energetic, they will fly. A warm butterfly will fly quicker; a cooler butterfly will take its time, providing a good opportunity for photographs.

Painted ladies are a solitary species, so we find that not all of them fly at once in a cloud. Instead, you will have a special moment with each butterfly when you release it. Some fly right away, some head for any nearby flowers or plants, and others may even remain in the boxes, or on your fingertips, and bask in the sunlight, wings open for the sun. Enjoy these moments with your butterflies, and move with care while they are in the area, as they may end up underfoot!

When the Creator made butterflies, he used only the most beautiful inspiration from the world.

He took black from the children's hair, yellow from the warm summer sun, orange from the flower blossom, and blue from the rivers and waters of the earth. But He did not give them a voice, as they were His own special creatures.

If you have a wish, a dream, or a secret, capture a butterfly and whisper to it. Since butterflies make no sound, they will carry your wish to Creator, who alone knows the thoughts of butterflies. By releasing them into the wild you are helping restore the sacred balance of nature, and your heart's needs will surely be granted.

Butterfly Wings N' Wishes respectfully acknowledges that we operate on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our business, our way of life, and our community.

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