

catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 12-Jul-12 03:21 AM GMT

i wanted to start my diarie today . i am a 1st timer at looking after catpillers . basicly i went to take photo yesterday and cam across some black catpillers



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so today i wanted to find out what kind of moth / butterfly they would be and i niver got a 100% answer but its between a peacock or a Tortoiseshell butterfly

it very exsiting so me and my family have desiced to go back and get 12 catapiller tomorow were only getting so meny because there a high death rate with this kind of catpillar and we plan to let go any that make it to adulthood were going to let them go where we 1st got them from.

so to night i am cleannng a tank to get it ready and getting a box ready to bring them home in
i will update tomorow with a photo of my 12 catapillers and a photo of them in there new home

sorry about the spelling i am dyslexic

i think this will be very good for my kids who are 11 , 9 , 3 and 1 as it so much fun to see them change into butterflys then let them go and see them fly away

Re: catapiller diaries

by David M, 12-Jul-12 04:26 AM GMT

I'm sure the kids will be fascinated, and given that you're dealing with a common species, I see no harm in taking a sample to rear yourself.

Good luck.

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 12-Jul-12 06:12 AM GMT

i would not be touching them if they were rare and were gona take the best care of them lol hopefully it will help my kids learn taht we need to look after them

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 12-Jul-12 11:08 PM GMT

so we have are caterpillars home now there just looking around there new tank .
here some more photo of them

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Re: catapiller diaries

by Gothic_dreams, 13-Jul-12 06:57 AM GMT

Some lovely caterpillar photos 😊 i do believe they are peacock caterpillars 😊

Chris

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 13-Jul-12 07:32 AM GMT

i'm wating to find out if i got into a photograthy college course . sooooooooooooo these wee caterpillars will be having a lot of photos taken of them lol you prob be sick of seeing them in a few weeks lol

Re: catapiller diaries

by Gothic_dreams, 13-Jul-12 07:41 AM GMT

I shall keep an eye on your diary over the coming weeks then, i always find it interesting seeing how things develop 😊 and good luck with the photography course 😊

Chris

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 13-Jul-12 07:43 AM GMT

i hope the poor caterpillars like metal music lol . i'm going to try to take butterfly photo over the summer but tbh you dont see meny about here

Re: catapiller diaries

by Gothic_dreams, 13-Jul-12 07:50 AM GMT

im quite lucky we get quite a few butterflies by me 😊 good choice of music by the way 🎧

Chris

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 13-Jul-12 09:59 PM GMT

well my caterpillars are very quite today i did see a few eathing a wee bit today but the did spend all yesterday trying to get out of the tank and were up very late at it so i think there just having a quite day i hope

Re: catapiller diaries

by MikeOxon, 14-Jul-12 06:36 AM GMT

It's great to see you following the life cycle through from the caterpillar stage – I hope some of them make it through to adult butterflies! I expect you have seen some of **Vince Massimo's** posts of early stages of various species. I'm sure they will enjoy the music – many animals seem to – and it's a good education for the kids!

Mike

Re: catapiller diaries

by Padfield, 14-Jul-12 07:45 AM GMT

You seem to have thistles in the tank and one of the caterpillars is on a thistle leaf. They will not eat this, as I'm sure you know, and need a fresh supply of living nettle (which you also seem to have in the tank).

If large caterpillars try to escape it may be that they are looking for a suitable place to pupate. This would also explain why some are not eating – they may have finished with food. I've never kept peacocks and others can advise better, but there need to be some strong stems in the tank for them to pupate on. If you see any hanging head down, in a slightly curved position, they are likely to be preparing for pupation and should not be moved.

After they pupate they will spend between two weeks and a month as a chrysalis. I hope others who have bred this species will advise on how to prepare for their emergence.

Guy

Re: caterpillar diaries

by millerd, 14-Jul-12 08:13 AM GMT

I have bred Peacocks a few times, and can confirm that when they are fully fed and ready to pupate they develop an urge to wander off. If their cage/tank is not completely secured they will escape for certain and will find the most unlikely spots to pupate in your house. However, within the cage they may spend a whole day just wandering before hanging upside-down from the roof, or from the stem or underside of a leaf of the foodplant. If the environment is reasonably warm and bright (not sunny), they may emerge in ten days; otherwise up to three weeks.

The pupae will start off either grey-brown or sometimes bright green, both with gold/silver markings to some extent. A few days before emergence you may well see the colours of the butterfly's wings appear through the pupal casing in exquisite miniature detail. The adult butterflies tend to hatch early on sunny mornings (even though they must be kept out of the sun, they seem to be able to sense the heightened light levels), so be prepared to get up at 7 to find some adults already hanging from the underside of the cage. They will continue to hatch over a few hours. If you notice that they pupated on different days, you will find they will hatch on successive days too.

You must try and resist the temptation to handle the new butterflies until after they have fully inflated their wings and dried them – this can take a couple of hours. Once this has happened, you may be able to "walk" them onto your finger so that you can transfer them to the outside world. Make sure you have a sunny window open, so that if they do take to the air early, they can find their way out. With luck, you will be able to transfer them from your finger to a sunny shrub outside where they will open their wings and bask before they take off for their first flight. Then you can admire close to the astonishing beauty of a newly-emerged Peacock butterfly.

Dave



A home-reared Peacock newly emerged (September 2009)

Re: caterpillar diaries

by feralkitten, 15-Jul-12 06:55 AM GMT

we brought back the two kinds of plants they were eating . maybe it was just a few confused caterpillars trying the other plant oops

Re: caterpillar diaries

by feralkitten, 18-Jul-12 07:58 PM GMT

so there been a big change



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i woke up to my catpillars turning into crysilis thing was i was getting them sticks today but there more than happy on the netting on top of my tank

also i had my 1st try at taken butterfly photos 2 days ago there not ace cause the butterfly would not let me get to close or it would fly away 😞

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Re: catapiller diaries

by MikeOxon, 21-Jul-12 06:21 AM GMT

You've clearly got the 'bug'! The first Red Admiral photo is particularly good and it's nice to hear that your caterpillars have pupated successfully.

Mike

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 21-Jul-12 08:01 PM GMT

yes all 12 are in there crysalis its really cool to see

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 21-Jul-12 10:37 PM GMT

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this is a photo taken today . but i'm having a problem as i need to clean the tank but some are hanging from the lid so i can't get in the tank without having to lift the lid with them still hanging from it

Re: caterpillar diaries

by Padfield, 21-Jul-12 11:02 PM GMT

Give it a few days for all the pupae to be hard and then, very gently, do what is necessary. I don't think cleanliness is important – unless you have noxious or rotting materials in the tank – but it will be important to provide sufficient vertical twigs and surfaces for emerging butterflies to crawl up and dry their wings on. Again, others, I hope, will advise you on this. I have very limited experience.

You have done amazingly well to get this far! I hope all the butterflies emerge successfully. It goes without saying that when they do they are very vulnerable and fragile and exciting as it will be to watch they must not be handled in any way when they are all soft and pumping up their wings.

Guy

Re: caterpillar diaries

by NickMorgan, 22-Jul-12 06:22 AM GMT

Amazing to see the chrysalis all in a row like that. Great fun for you and the kids. I rarely find chrysalis in the wild and doing what you have done seems to be my best chance of seeing any.

Re: caterpillar diaries

by David M, 22-Jul-12 06:59 AM GMT

This is pretty impressive for a first attempt, I must say. 😊

Re: caterpillar diaries

by Vince Massimo, 22-Jul-12 07:22 AM GMT

"feralkitten" wrote:

yes all 12 are in there chrysalis its really cool to see

Hi Sarah,

That's a great survival rate 😊 .

I was not expecting them to pupate so soon because it seemed that the caterpillars still had some growing to do. Clearly they were in their final stage. On the basis of the photos posted so far I would continue to say that they are Small Tortoiseshells. They should be hatching in approximately 14–21 days and you will get an indication when the chrysalis starts to change colour.

It would now be a good idea to clear the tank of old vegetation and droppings. The pupae located on the stem seem to be very close to the ground and I am concerned that the emerging butterflies have enough space to dry their wings. If possible, try to carefully raise the whole stem by tying it to a number of sticks (one at each end and one in the middle), but keep it level so that the pupae continue to hang freely and don't touch the side of the tank. This will not only help the butterflies but will also enable you to observe their development better. If this is not possible then just lean some sticks against the side of the tank close to where the butterflies will emerge.

The best bit is yet to come.

Vince

Re: caterpillar diaries

by feralkitten, 22-Jul-12 10:24 PM GMT

the problem i have is there some hanging from the netting on the lid of the tank so i can't get into the tank without having to lift the lid with them on it

Re: catapiller diaries

by Vince Massimo, 22-Jul-12 11:33 PM GMT

Hi Sarah,

Presumably you're going to have to lift the lid in order to release the adults, so you may as well do it now (but very carefully) 😊 . If necessary cut away any piece of netting that has a chrysalis attached it and tie that netting to a twig. If the chrysalises are attached directly to the lid then just lift the lid and prop it up until you have finished in the tank, then put it back. You really need to make sure that the chrysalises at the bottom of the tank have enough clearance from the ground so that the emerging adults can safely dry their wings.

Vince

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 25-Jul-12 08:43 PM GMT

so we have fixed the tank and i got sme photo when we were doing it as i will not get another chance lol



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they look a bit like little bats dont they lol



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thats there tank now before we pt the lid back on

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 26-Jul-12 10:26 PM GMT

WE HAVE BUTTERFLYS !!! i was not exspecting them for a few more days yet but they like to shock me lol i will get photo up soon but they wont be the best photo as i'm taken them threw glass

Re: catapiller diaries

by MikeOxon, 26-Jul-12 10:36 PM GMT

"feralkitten" wrote:
WE HAVE BUTTERFLYS !!!

GREAT NEWS!!! Isn't it amazing how quickly it happens – all that incredible transformation inside the chrysalis in just a few days. Look forward to seeing some photos.

Mike

Re: catapiller diaries

by Pauline, 26-Jul-12 11:00 PM GMT

Can't wait to see your butterfly photos Feralkitten. Very well done indeed.

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 26-Jul-12 11:01 PM GMT

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Re: catapiller diaries

by Vince Massimo, 26-Jul-12 11:25 PM GMT

Blimey, that was quick 😊 . The conditions in the tank must have suited them. Keep an eye on the other chrysalises and you will see them changing colour. When they get very dark they will be ready to hatch and you may be lucky to see one emerge early in the morning.

Vince

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 26-Jul-12 11:41 PM GMT

i'm a little worried abiyt one taht wing is still stick in it crislis and the other wings out it been liek that for a few hours i dont know if i should try to help it or not

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 27-Jul-12 01:33 AM GMT

this is my stuck butterfly but its hard to see

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and these are just some more photos 😊

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Re: catapiller diaries

by David M, 27-Jul-12 01:38 AM GMT

Excellent results and thanks for sharing. 😊

Re: catapiller diaries

by Padfield, 27-Jul-12 02:01 AM GMT

Yes, free it. If its wing dries like that it will mever fly.

Guy

Re: catapiller diaries

by NickMorgan, 27-Jul-12 02:09 AM GMT

Fantastic. Yes, this has all happened very quickly. How many butterflies have emerged so far?

Re: catapiller diaries

by David M, 27-Jul-12 02:19 AM GMT

"padfield" wrote:

Yes, free it. If its wing dries like that it will mever fly.

Hadn't seen that image, Guy.

Yes, if it's still stuck then try to remove the pupal case. I'd gently pick up the butterfly by its body and try to flake the casing away rather than trying to tear at it. Even if the butterfly loses a little of its wing tip it should still be able to fly perfectly well.

Re: catapiller diaries

by Padfield, 27-Jul-12 03:20 AM GMT

Sorry for the very hasty answer – I was on the train, going in and out of reception. I have no experience of this myself, but that situation did seem to be beyond the butterfly's ability to solve, so you needed to step in quickly.

I hope it went OK.

Guy

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 27-Jul-12 03:45 AM GMT

its not looking good the wing was so dried out and the butterfly had been twisting around and round trying to get it out my dh did a great job and got most if the wing out but then at the last min most snaped off as it was so dried off so just now it back in the tank bit i dont hink it can fly i will add photo in a min so you guys and advies me wahts best to do i feel bad for not helping it hours ago but i was not shore if it would get it self out as i niver had butterflys before

Re: catapiller diaries

by MikeOxon, 27-Jul-12 03:57 AM GMT

Even if you've lost one, you've done very well to bring all the others through! Remember that lots succumb in the wild!

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 27-Jul-12 03:58 AM GMT

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Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 27-Jul-12 03:58 AM GMT

so far we have 4 helthy ones and one not helthy due to its wing and the rest are still in cristlists

Re: catapiller diaries

by Padfield, 27-Jul-12 04:04 AM GMT

I hate tragedies.

Maybe it can nectar, even if it can't fly. My advice would be to try to give it as much pleasure as possible, if it can take pleasure, and then to put it to sleep gently. A non-violent way of putting a butterfly to sleep is to put it in a dark container in the fridge, when it will go torpid, and later transferring it in the same container to the freezer, where it will die without waking up.

Guy

EDIT: I posted this before you posted the pictures. See if she (for she is a girl) can enjoy a last (and first) supper. Sadly, she has no future.

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 27-Jul-12 04:16 AM GMT

yeah i thought we may need to put her out her missery. we dont blame ourself as no one has messed with them or anything so just one of them sad thing the butterfly was cleay not ment to live and in the wild would have died with it ling still traped hanging upside down

Re: catapiller diaries

by David M, 27-Jul-12 05:59 AM GMT

Yes, sadly that butterfly has no future really, but reassure yourself that had you not taken those caterpillars the likelihood is that it would have been predated before it even got to this stage.

Clearly, it will never fly so cannot be released, so Guy is probably right – give it a good feed (warm water mixed with sugar on a bit of cotton wool would be well received), then do what Guy suggested.

Very sad, but this is the way of things in nature, only in most cases far more brutal.

Re: catapiller diaries

by NickMorgan, 27-Jul-12 06:06 AM GMT

I saw a Small Tortoiseshell today with both rear wings that looked a little like that. It could still fly, however. I am sure that there must be a high percentage that perish in the wild like that.

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 27-Jul-12 07:09 PM GMT

so today there is 9! helthy butterflys and one with the damiged wing

and tehre still more to come out i think dh got more than 12 oops

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 28-Jul-12 03:29 AM GMT

well in the end there was 12 helthy butterflys ! ready to go and 6 still in there crislits i think so here some photo of them being set free good luck to my 12 little guys who are now free



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Re: catapiller diaries

by David M, 28-Jul-12 05:30 AM GMT

Heartening stuff, feralkitten.

Hopefully these butterflies will give pleasure to many over the next few weeks. I suspect that had you not reared them yourself, there'd only be 2 or 3 that would have made it to adulthood.

Thanks for sharing and I'm sure your kids have had a fascinating few days to boot!

Re: catapiller diaries

by MikeOxon, 28-Jul-12 06:02 AM GMT

Just a few short weeks since we were wondering what sort the caterpillars were! Now, it's the Small Tortoiseshell diaries.

Thank you for letting us share this experience with you and your family 😊😊😊

Mike

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 28-Jul-12 06:37 AM GMT

not finshed yet i still have siz more to come out lol

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 28-Jul-12 06:39 AM GMT

what was great was when we went to let them go there was 6 kids from where we live where right over looking in tank all exsited to see them go all of they 6 kids + are 4 where really good a no one tried to hurt them or run after them to catch them so in a way i got other kids into them lol

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 29-Jul-12 12:09 AM GMT

well that the last 6 butterfly drying there wings i'm a little sad as i thought i have a few days untill they were ready.

Re: catapiller diaries

by Pauline, 29-Jul-12 05:22 AM GMT

Don't be sad – you've done a great job and it has been so interesting to see your updates. I haven't seen a Small Tort in the wild for 2 years now 😞 . Good that the kids are interested too.

Re: catapiller diaries

by feralkitten, 29-Jul-12 06:58 AM GMT

well there not loads of thm in kirkcaldy in scotland lol
i will let go my last 6 tomorrow