



NEWS



SUMMER 2024

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Our Mission

The Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium inspires an appreciation and understanding of insects and their relatives.

Visit us!

1075 South Ave. W, Suite 2,
Missoula, MT 59801
missoulabutterflyhouse.org/visit-us



Scan the QR code
to learn more!

Hours

Tuesday-Saturday: 10am-5pm
Sunday: Noon to 4pm
Monday: CLOSED

The Buzz Settling Into Our New Normal

By Jen Marangelo, Executive Director



It's hard to believe, but it's been over 7 months since we opened our doors! Thanks to the enthusiastic response from the Missoula community and visitors from across Montana and around the country, these months have been nothing short of extraordinary.

In planning for our first full-year of operations, we had hoped that we'd see around 65,000 visitors come through the doors. I'm thrilled to report that visitation in our first 7 months has been well above our projections. We've already welcomed over 55,000 visitors and are in the middle of what's proving to be a busy summer.

While things have exceeded our expectations in many ways and have been a resounding success on just about all fronts, launching any new endeavor comes with the need to make planned and unplanned adjustments. It's like moving into a new home or taking on a new job ...there's inevitably a period of time needed to settle into what will be your "new normal."

We've made plenty of small changes, like replacing the acrylic tops to our exhibit terrariums with glass tops that will not warp; installing our "Who's Flying Today" board in the butterfly house to let visitors know which species are in the conservatory that day; and adding new features within the butterfly house (like our hanging planters).

But there have been bigger changes too, like installing our Observation Honey Bee Hive and

Leafcutter Ant exhibits; working with local artists to create murals in our classroom and other areas to really personalize our space; and adding a cooling system (in progress) to address the shortcomings of the initial design to keep the butterfly house cool enough during the hot days of summer.

"...in our first 7 months...We've already welcomed over 55,000 visitors..."

As with all plans in life, you do your best and make adjustments for the rest.

After we've gone through our first full-year of operations, I feel like we'll be more or less "settled in." But that's not to say that things won't continue to change. Change spawns innovation and improvement. It brings new programs highlighting new topics, information, and amazing species. And it means that you'll always have something new to experience and learn when you walk through the doors.

THANK YOU for making these first 7 months so incredible. I hope to see you in the butterfly house soon! 🦋



My, How We've Grown!

Since opening our doors late last year, our organization is not the only thing that's experienced significant growth! Along with the addition of a living plant wall, three massive hanging planters, and a few other aesthetic changes, the butterfly house has undergone an amazing growth spurt over the past months.

This beautiful, ever-evolving space is thanks to Rob Taylor, our Lead Horticulturalist. With a deep love for all things that grow, Rob has added new flowering plants and features specifically for the butterflies as well as a few plants (like the Black Bat Flower) for their amazing beauty.

Having opened last December, we were just getting underway at the time of year when plant growth naturally slows down. But by mid-March, with longer days and more direct sunlight, plant growth took off in earnest.

That's not to say that it's been smooth sailing all the time. Plants inevitably attract pest species such as spider mites, mealybugs, and aphids. In addition to many hours spent clipping affected leaves and limbs, and manually "washing" leaves with neem oil,

visitors may have noticed the small (but mighty) armies of Convergent Lady Beetles (*Hippodamia convergens*) and Mealybug Ladybirds (*Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*) we've released to naturally bring the aphid and mealybug numbers under control. Within a few days of release, the hungry ladybugs make a dramatic difference.

Native to Southeast Asia, the **Black Bat Flower** is a member of the yam family. Its eggplant-colored blooms produce long bracteoles that look like cats' whiskers, with the entire flower resembling the scrunched-up nose of a bat.



With an abundance of sunlight and Rob's expert care, the butterfly house is quickly taking on a jungle-like feel that will continue to evolve in the months ahead. Visit us soon to see this amazing transformation for yourself! 🦋

Special Programs

Over the past months, we've launched and re-launched a number of special programs and are getting ready to offer some incredible learning opportunities this fall. If you haven't attended some of these programs before, here's what you've been missing:

- **BUTTERFLY RELEASES:** Every Tuesday through Saturday, at 10:30 am and Sundays at 12:30 pm. See our newest butterflies stretch their wings for the first time and learn more about these beautiful insects.
- **PREDATOR FEEDINGS:** Join us on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 3:30 pm to explore how our predators hunt, capture, and eat their meals. We feature a different arthropod predator each day.

- **NATURE IN BITE SIZE:** Join us each Wednesday at noon for a short naturalist talk covering topics from the world of arthropods.
- **QUIET HOURS:** We're trying something new. Join us for an Adult Quiet Hour and a Sensory Friendly Hour for individuals needing less noise and stimulation. Pre-registration is required. Check our website calendar or call us for dates and information.
- **DNA LEARNING LAB:** Join us on September 7th, 14th, and 21st for a unique learning experience taking you all the way from field collection of insect specimens to extracting and analyzing DNA ...all while contributing to a nationwide research project. For more info and to register, go to missoulabutterflyhouse.org/CDBN/ or email Brenna at brenna@missoulabutterflyhouse.org.



Got Fireflies?

We hear it all the time. For anyone who has lived or spent time during the summer in some of the central and eastern states, one of their most memorable insect encounters was the magical lightshow put on at night by fireflies.

Fireflies of the day-active, non-flashing variety are not hard to find here in Montana. But many people are surprised to hear that we have populations of flashing fireflies across the state. Some of the reasons they fly under the radar are the fact that their populations are few and far between (being extremely habitat specific); they are generally only around for a few weeks; and they only flash late at night, long after the summer sun has set and many of us are already inside for the evening.

To help shed some light (pun intended) on where these isolated populations are being found and what species are represented, the Missoula

Butterfly House and Insectarium is partnering with the Western Firefly Project – a community science project based out of the Natural History Museum of Utah. To date, the project has documented fireflies in 7 Western states.

Originally focused on sightings in Utah, in 2019 the project expanded to include Montana, which currently is the most underrepresented Western state. We hope to change that in the years ahead and have already connected with landowners and citizen scientists to document populations found in the Bitterroot, Blackfoot, and Flathead Valleys as well as locations east of the Continental Divide. 🦋

Firefly Photos: BJ Nicholls



Got fireflies, or know of someone who has flashing fireflies on their property? Contact us to become part of this unique community science project at **406-317-1211** or glenn@missoulabutterflyhouse.org.

Join the Flight Crew!

While visitors love the variety of beautiful arthropod species we have on exhibit, as you might guess, the butterflies tend to steal the show.

However, with an average life-span of only 1 to 2 weeks, in order to maintain such a magical experience we're ordering 250 new butterflies each week. And that adds up. In fact, second to staffing costs, butterflies are our most expensive line item in our annual budget. But what's a "butterfly house" without butterflies?!

Starting at just \$10 a month (about the cost of two drive-thru coffee drinks) you can help our butterflies spread their wings all year long by

becoming part of our Flight Crew – a monthly giving club focused specifically on securing our butterflies. **Just scan this QR code** or go to weblink.donorperfect.com/FlightCrew.



As a token of our appreciation, you'll receive a Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium Flight Crew stainless steel thermal tumbler.* Whether you use it at work or at home, we hope

it will serve as a reminder of our appreciation for the impact your support has each month. 🦋

**Butterfly not included.*



MBHI STAFF LIST

Andie Hernandez, Lead Animal Keeper

Stacy Carr-Poole, Operations Director

Shelby Fisher, Administrative Coordinator

Scott Debnam, Living Collections Assistant

Madeline Kleeman, Museum Interpreter

Kate Likvan, Gift Shop Manager

Glenn Marangelo, Development Director

Jen Marangelo, Executive Director

Hallee Olsen, Museum Assistant

Brenna Shea, Science Education & Communications

Ashley Sinclair, Admissions Associate

Carolyn Taber, Museum Educator

Rob Taylor, Lead Horticulturalist

Savannah Thompson, Weekend Naturalist

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Volunteer!

Despite the fact that the size of our staff more than doubled over the past year, we couldn't do what we do without our amazing crew of volunteers! From helping with animal care ...to interacting with guests in the butterfly house ...to helping with mailings (and everything in between), our volunteers make an appreciated difference in our operations every day.

Whether you can volunteer a few hours a month or a few hours a week, we have plenty of opportunities for you to become engaged in our growing efforts. 🦋



For more information or to fill out our volunteer application to get the ball rolling, go to missoulabutterflyhouse.org/get-involved/volunteer/ or scan the QR code.



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