

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## How Moths Reproduce

Moths have a fascinating way of reproducing that ensures the next generation can survive and thrive. Their life cycle begins when adult moths find a mate, which typically happens at night. Male moths use their sensitive, feathery antennae to detect the scent of female moths, even from far away. Once they locate a female, they perform a mating behavior that often involves flying close to her and releasing chemical signals called pheromones to communicate their presence.

After mating, female moths lay their eggs, usually on the underside of leaves or on tree bark. These spots are carefully chosen because they provide food for the caterpillars once they hatch. The gestation period, or the time it takes for the eggs to hatch, is typically between 4 to 10 days, depending on the species and the temperature. Warmer temperatures usually speed up the process.

A single female moth can lay anywhere from 50 to over 1,000 eggs during her lifetime, depending on the species. These eggs are tiny and often arranged in clusters or rows. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae, also known as caterpillars, emerge. These caterpillars immediately start feeding on the nearby plants to grow and prepare for their next stage of life.

Moths do not care for their young after the eggs are laid. The mother moth's job is to ensure she places her eggs in a safe, food-rich environment so the caterpillars can survive on their own. After laying her eggs, the female moth's life is usually near its end, as moths have a short lifespan—often just a few weeks to a month.

This cycle of mating, laying eggs, and starting the next generation is critical to maintaining moth populations. Although moths don't care for their offspring the way mammals do, their careful choice of egg-laying sites helps ensure their young have a good chance of survival.