

# Polyphemus Moth



## *Polyphemus Moth Care*

- Unpack your cocoon and place it in a mesh insect house or any enclosed container at least 11 inches high by 11 inches in diameter. Your cocoon may wriggle a bit.
- Place a small branch or stick in your house to give your moth a place to hang once it has emerged.
- Spray the cocoon lightly with tepid water every day. Spray more often if room humidity is low. A plant sprayer with a fine mister works well for this. Don't let your cocoon get too wet. Make sure that it isn't sitting in a puddle.
- It may take two to several weeks for the moth to emerge.
- Release your moth in a dark or shady place a day or two after it emerges.

## *About the Polyphemus Moth*

The Polyphemus moth (*Antheraea polyphemus*) is common in woodlands of the United States and Canada. Its name comes from the Greek myth of the Cyclops Polyphemus and refers to the large eyespots on the hindwings. Polyphemus is one of our larger moths, having a wing spread of three to almost six inches (7.5 to 15 cm).

The Polyphemus moth caterpillar grows to almost 4 inches long (10 cm) and is bright green. They feed on the leaves of a variety of trees including oak, willow, birch and maple.

The adult Polyphemus moth does not feed. It lives for only a few days (4 to 10 in captivity). Captive Polyphemus moths seldom breed; however, breeding will sometimes occur if fresh oak leaves are placed in their cage.

## *How are Moths Like and Unlike Butterflies?*

- Moths and butterflies are both insects. They have three main body parts (head, thorax, abdomen). They have six legs. Their bodies are covered by a hard exoskeleton.
- Moths and butterflies have the same life cycle: egg, larva, pupa, and imago.
- Moths and butterflies have wings and antennas.

- Moths have relatively large antennas that look like tiny feathers. Butterflies' antennas are thin and often have knobs on the ends.



- Most moths fly at night and rest in the day. (A few moths fly in the day or at dawn and dusk). Butterflies fly in the day and rest at night.
- Most moths lay their wings flat when they rest. Butterflies hold theirs upright.
- Many moths wrap their pupas in cocoons, which are made of leaves (like luna moths') or spun from silk secreted by the caterpillar (like silk moths'). Butterflies do not make cocoons. Their pupal exoskeletons—called chrysalises—are strong and protective.



Earth's Birthday Project  
PO Box 1536 · Santa Fe NM 87504  
800 698 4438  
earthsbirthday.org