



Butterfly Wing Collage

Get inspired by up-close views of butterfly wings, and create a collage!



Materials Needed:

Cardstock, round lid to trace a circle, pencil, tissue paper, construction paper, scissors, glue. *Optional:* Hole punch, other craft materials (stickers, sequins, yarn, etc.)

Instructions:

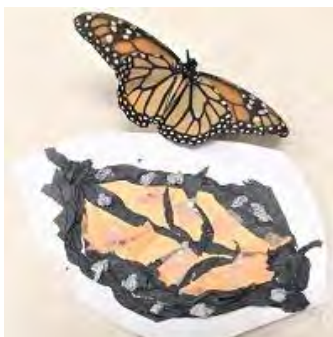
Step 1: Look closely at the pictures of butterflies on the next pages. What colors, shapes, or patterns do you see?

Step 2: Use a round lid to trace a circle on the cardstock. Cut out the circle.

Step 3: Use construction paper, tissue paper, and other craft supplies to create a collage inspired by butterfly wings. Let your observations inspire you!

Step 4: Cut or tear the papers and glue them to the cardstock. Use scissors to trim around the edge of the circle.

Step 5: Be creative! Your collage can look realistic, or be abstract. You can use the provided examples for inspiration, or invent your own colors and patterns.



Butterfly Colors

There are about 80 species of butterflies in Alaska. They come in many different colors and patterns, from the black-and-yellow Mourning Cloak to the blue shades of the Alaskan Blue and the tan-and-brown Tanana Arctic.

There are many reasons for butterflies to have specific colors and patterns:

Camouflage: Colors help butterflies blend into their environment and avoid predators. Alaska butterflies live in many different habitats, including boreal forests, tundra, bogs, fields, and meadows. Their colors and patterns help them match the colors of their surroundings.



Common Branded Skipper (*Hesperia comma borealis*). [Image: Ken Philip.](#)



Warmth: Butterflies need to absorb sunlight to stay warm. Darker colors absorb more sunlight, so some Arctic species have dark wing patterns.

Left: Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio canadensis*) basking in the sun. *UAMN photo.*

Warning and Mimicry: Although there are no poisonous butterflies in Alaska, in other regions some species are brightly colored to warn predators that they are poisonous. Other non-poisonous butterflies have patterns that imitate poisonous species to fool predators.

Discover more about Alaska butterflies and see photos of the Kenelm Philip Collection: kenphilipcollection.alaska.edu

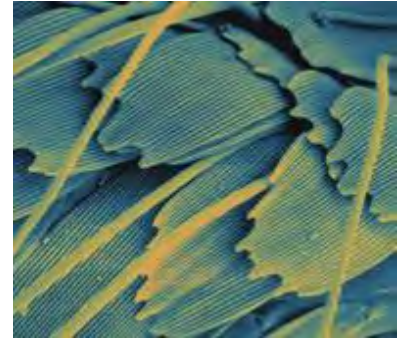
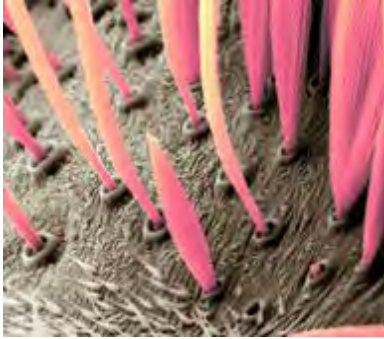
Did You Know? Blue Morpho butterflies, which live in Central and South America, appear to have bright blue wings. But they don't have any blue pigment! They have tiny scales covering their wings. Light waves bouncing off the scales interfere with each other, and only blue wavelengths reach your eyes, making the wings look blue. This is called *structural color*: color produced by the interaction of light waves with an object's structure.



Blue Morpho. [Image: NISEnet.](#)

Even the Smallest Animals Can Inspire Art!

Local artist Jennifer Moss looked at *Lepidoptera* (butterfly and moth) wings under a scanning electron microscope, then created paintings inspired by the colors, patterns, and forms she saw.



Above: Views of butterfly wings under a scanning electron microscope.












Above: Artworks from *The Lightness of Being* series by Jennifer Moss.

Use the illustrations below, and the pictures of Alaska butterflies on the next page, as inspiration for your collage!



Alaska Butterflies Images

The butterflies pictured below are just a few of around 80 butterfly species that live in Alaska. Images are not to scale.

 <p>Canadian Tiger Swallowtail <i>Papilio canadensis</i></p>	 <p>Giant Sulphur <i>Colias gigantea</i></p>	 <p>Lively Clouded Sulphur <i>Colias philodice vitabunda</i></p>
 <p>Arctic Skipper <i>Carterocephalus palaemon skada</i></p>	 <p>Northern Marble <i>Euchloe creusa</i></p>	 <p>Alaskan Blue <i>Plebejus idas alaskensis</i></p>
 <p>Arctic Anglewing <i>Polygonia faunus arcticus</i></p>	 <p>Denali Bog Fritillary <i>Boloria eunomia denali</i></p>	 <p>Philip's Arctic <i>Oeneis philipi</i></p>

Did You Know?

- The wings of a butterfly are covered in miniature scales.
- Butterflies have four wings: two *forewings* closest to its head, and two *hindwings* in the rear. All four move up and down during flight.
- Some wing colors help butterflies blend in with their surroundings, while others are bright to frighten predators away.