

Discover the Fauna of Our

Large White

Kingdom: Animals (Animalia)

Phylum: Arthropods (Arthropoda)

Class: Insects (Insecta)

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Pieridae (Whites)

Genus: Pieris

Species: Large White / Cabbage butterfly caterpillar (*Pieris brassicae*)

The Large White butterfly caterpillar (*Pieris brassicae*) is a larval stage of an insect found in agricultural fields, especially wherever cabbage crops are cultivated. Although it may initially look like a simple, slow-moving green worm, its biology, voracious appetite, and metamorphosis mechanism into an adult butterfly are quite complex.



The cabbage caterpillar is one of nature's most organized "eating machines." Its body is elongated, cylindrical, and composed of several segments. The color is typically yellowish-green, covered with black spots and small hairs. This coloration provides excellent camouflage among

cabbage leaves. While they lack complex eyes, they have small ocelli (simple eyes) sensitive to light. They perceive movement and the condition of the plant through sensitive hairs on their bodies.

These caterpillars possess a powerful chewing mouth apparatus. They rapidly gnaw on leaves starting from the edges, sometimes leaving only the thick veins behind. They can "taste" using their mouthparts and front legs. Additionally, special fleshy "prolegs" (false legs) on the abdominal section allow them to grip slippery leaf surfaces firmly.

- Eggs: A female butterfly can lay groups of 20 to 100 yellow eggs on the underside of a leaf.
- Hatching: After just 4–10 days, small, hungry caterpillars emerge and immediately begin feeding to rapidly increase their size.

- **Growth:** Throughout its development, the caterpillar molts (sheds its skin) several times. Once it has gathered enough nutrients, it retreats into a hard shell (pupa). In warm weather, the larval stage lasts only 2–3 weeks, meaning their numbers can increase massively in a single season and destroy an entire crop.
- **Agricultural Impact**

While cabbage caterpillars do not bite humans, they are considered one of the most dangerous agricultural pests. They act as "mechanical destroyers," constantly moving among cabbage, radish, mustard, and other cruciferous plants. Their bodies and excretions contain substances that can rot plant tissues. During a mass infestation, the plant's ability to photosynthesize is lost, and productivity drops completely.

You may often see caterpillars standing motionless in groups on a leaf; this is a tactic for both digestion and protection from predators. When a food source is exhausted, they use their sensory systems to navigate toward new, fresh leaves. While they are a vital part of the natural food chain (serving as food for birds and parasitoids), they remain a serious risk factor for gardening and farming. Seeing small holes in leaves or black fecal remains is a clear warning of a potential caterpillar infestation nearby.