

**Date:** December 18, 2008



## MARCH MORPHO MANIA™ INVADES THE SOPHIA M. SACHS BUTTERFLY HOUSE!

- WHAT:** March Morpho Mania™  
**WHEN:** Saturday, Feb. 28 through Sunday, Mar. 29 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed Mondays). Massive Morpho releases: Saturdays at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House, 15193 Olive Blvd. in Faust Park  
**COST:** Included with Butterfly House admission (\$6 adults, \$4.50 seniors, \$4 ages 4 to 12). Free children ages 3 and under.  
**SPONSORS:** Sponsored by Novus International, Inc.  
**INFO:** [www.butterflyhouse.org](http://www.butterflyhouse.org); (636) 530-0076

(ST. LOUIS): Back by popular demand, **March Morpho Mania™** invades the Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House from Saturday, Feb. 28 through Sunday, Mar. 29. More than 1,500 lustrous Common Blue Morpho butterflies will deluge the indoor Tropical Conservatory in free-flight throughout the month. Witness massive Morpho releases every Saturday at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Follow the clues on a scavenger hunt map to win a prize. Explore the animals, plants and customs of the Morphos' native Costa Rica through drop-in youth programs, and learn more about the Butterfly House's positive impact on the El Bosque Nuevo butterfly farm in Central America.

"Common Blue Morpho butterflies are without a doubt the favorite of our visitors," said Joe Norton, director of the Butterfly House. "Response was so overwhelming from last year's March Morpho Mania that we've annualized the event and added activities to enhance visitors' enjoyment of and learning about these wonderful animals from Costa Rica."

Common Blue Morpho butterflies cannot be found in the U. S. Animals on display at the Butterfly House are raised at El Bosque Nuevo (The New Forest), a butterfly farm in Costa Rica that uses all of its operations proceeds to protect acreage of tropical rain forest, including the plants, animals and insects that live there.

Common Blue Morphos, or *Morpho peleides*, are the second-largest butterfly

(over)

15193 Olive Boulevard

Chesterfield, MO 63017

phone (636) 530-0076

fax (636) 530-1516

[www.butterflyhouse.org](http://www.butterflyhouse.org)

Development Office:

P.O. Box 299

St. Louis, MO 63166

phone (314) 577-5154

fax (314) 577-0243

a division of the



## **ADD ONE: Morpho Mania**

species at the Butterfly House, with a wingspan of up to eight inches. Their bright blue wings serve to establish territory, signal to mates, and fool predators in flight. The blue is actually caused by refracted light, not by pigment, so the color appears to change depending on the angle of view. At rest, the Common Blue Morpho displays the underside of its wings, which is mottled brown with eyespots. It is an effective defense mechanism, making the butterflies hard to find in the thick jungle where they roost and scaring away predators that do spot them.

Blue Morpho caterpillars take up to three months to develop. Their chrysalides are green, camouflaging them amidst the leaves where they form. As adults, the butterflies will not visit flowers for nectar, but rather feast on rotting fruit, tree sap, dung, and dead animal carcass. At the Butterfly House, the animals thrive on a vegetarian diet of bananas and other fruits.

On average, visitors will see about 200 Common Blue Morpho butterflies at any one time inside the Tropical Conservatory. During March Morpho Mania, a whopping 1,500 Common Blue Morpho butterflies will be on display daily. At 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays and 2 p.m. on Sundays, staff entomologists will release several hundred butterflies at once in a unique photo opportunity. Hand-held cameras only, please; no tripods, monopods, or external flash equipment is permitted. Capacity is limited for the massive Morpho releases.

From 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturdays and noon to 2:30 p.m. on Sundays, families can stop by the Lopata Learning Lab for fun classroom activities with a Costa Rican theme. Learn about the country's native animals on Feb. 28 and Mar. 1, 14 and 15; explore the customs of Costa Rica on Mar. 7, 8, 28 and 29; and investigate the plants of Costa Rica on Mar. 21 and 22.

During the month, stop by the Information Desk to pick up a free scavenger hunt map. Clues will lead visitors throughout the facility to answer questions about butterflies and plants. Turn in a completed sheet at the Madame Butterfly Gift Shop for a small prize and to enjoy a 25-percent discount off the same-day purchase of one full-price item.

March Morpho Mania is sponsored by Novus International, Inc.

The Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesdays through Sundays (closed Mondays). March Morpho Mania activities are included with Butterfly House admission of \$6 adults; \$4.50 seniors ages 65 and over; and \$4 children ages four to 12. Children ages three and under and Missouri Botanical Garden members are free.

The Butterfly House is located at 15193 Olive Blvd. at Faust Park in Chesterfield, Mo. Free parking is available on site.

For more information, visit [www.butterflyhouse.org](http://www.butterflyhouse.org) or call (636) 530-0076.

**NOTE: Color digital images available by request. Download media materials at [www.butterflyhouse.org/press](http://www.butterflyhouse.org/press).**

The mission of the Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House is to foster a greater understanding of plant and animal relationships in the environment in order to promote the conservation and restoration of natural habitats.

Note: A section of the I-64/U.S. 40 highway is under construction through 2009. Before traveling, check [www.thenewi64.org](http://www.thenewi64.org) for updates. Go to [www.getaroundstl.com](http://www.getaroundstl.com) for other helpful information.