

**Robins**

Lots of animals hatch from eggs — snakes, fish, turtles and birds, to name a few. Most baby birds are not fully developed at birth like snakes and turtles are and look very different from the adult bird. The American robin, with its characteristic red breast, is one of the most easily recognized birds in Ontario. The babies however, are naked and pink, and have closed eyes that seem much too large for their heads, making the newborns look like aliens. Baby robins often keep their large yellow beak open and continually squawk for food, eating up to 40 times a day!

Without the assistance of their parents, baby robins are helpless and remain quiet when the adults are not around so as to not attract predators.

The average robin can have three different broods (groups of offspring) every season. The female lays three or four blue eggs in April or early May. After about two weeks, the babies are able to leave the nest on short outings. In one month, they are completely independent and leave the nest permanently.

# I have never seen a smiling face that is not

Answer each of the following questions. Write the circled letters in the spaces above to complete the phrase.

1. Baby \_\_\_\_\_ may eat up to 40 times each day.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ are the young of the eastern newt.
3. White \_\_\_\_\_ butterfly larvae look a lot like bird droppings.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ moth larvae looks as if it is wearing a hoodie.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ and pollywogs are the aquatic stage of frogs and toads.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ moth caterpillar is green with 'eye spots' on its back to confuse predators.
7. Tadpoles undergo metamorphosis where they transform into \_\_\_\_\_.
8. A \_\_\_\_\_'s gills are on the outside of its body and look like a bright red mane.
9. Although \_\_\_\_\_ babies are covered in soft down, they still have their parents heart-shaped face.

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**Answers:**  
1. robins  
2. efts  
3. admiral  
4. polyphemus  
5. tadpoles  
6. cecropia  
7. frogs  
8. mudpuppy  
9. barn owl  
Phrase: beautiful



By Kerry G. Everitt  
Illustrations by Judie Shore



polyphemous moth caterpillars

# Beastly Babies

Many creatures in nature undergo huge transformations from the time they are born or hatch until they become adults

**In the animal kingdom,** some young and adults are so ugly that only a mother could love them. Although many insects, birds and amphibians may be considered ugly, often their grotesque appearance protects them from predators. Being beautiful and colourful draws other animals' attention, which can have deadly consequences.

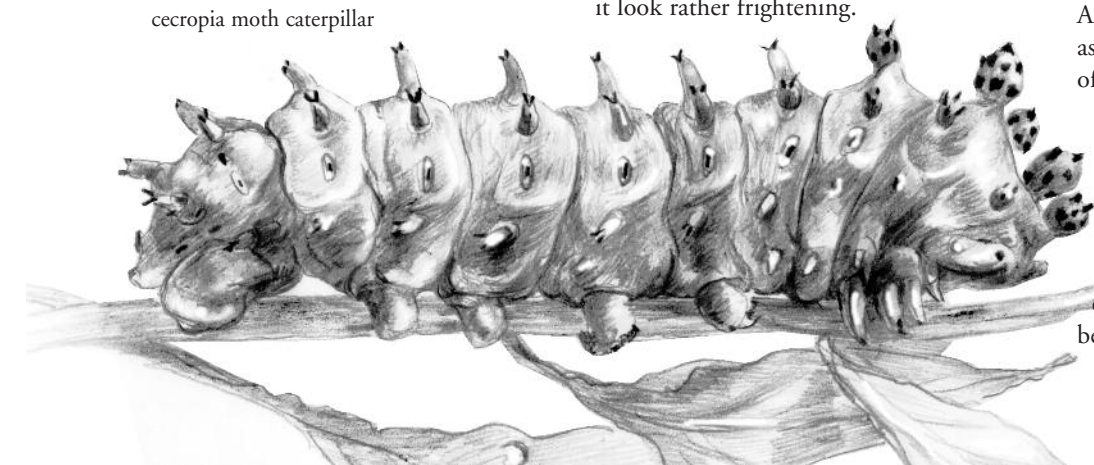
**The largest moths in North America — Giant Silk Moths**

The larva of the **polyphemus moth** is undoubtedly one of the most alien looking of all larvae. Its head appears to be partly sunken into its body, making it look as if the larva is wearing a green hoodie. Although the thick, fat body is lime green in colour, the head is light pink. To potential predators, the large mandibles and claws of the larva make it look rather frightening.

Unlike the freakish-looking caterpillar, the adult cecropia moth is a beautiful beige colour with large circle patterns resembling eyes on each of its lower wings.

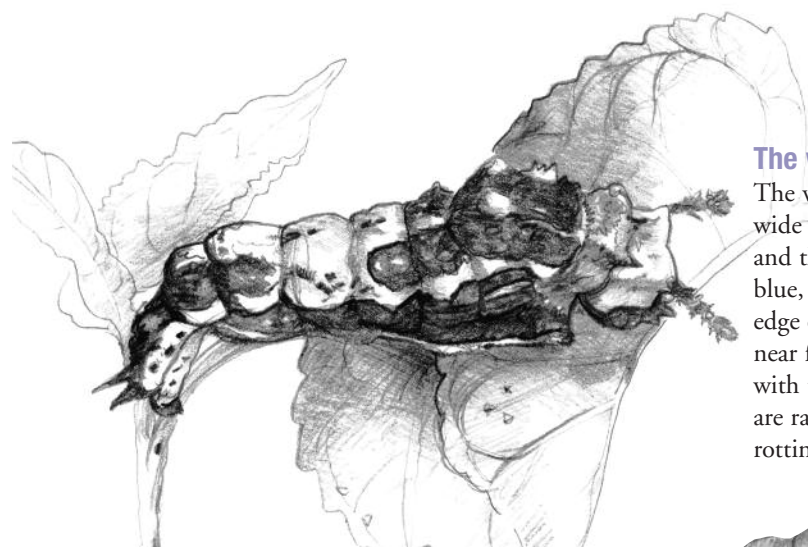
The **cecropia moth**, which is larger than your hand, is a spectacular example. The adult has a rust-coloured body, brown wings edged with rust and black stripes. As well, the cecropia moth has "eye" spots and crescent-moon markings on each of its wings that serve to confuse predators. Although not quite as spectacular looking as the adult moth, the caterpillar, or larva, of this species also has markings that confuse would-be predators. Its lime green body is covered by green, yellow and red raised bumps, each of which is barbed or spiked, making the caterpillar look somewhat porcupine-like. It's surprising that such a spiky-looking caterpillar can transform into a soft, furry, beautiful moth.

cecropia moth caterpillar



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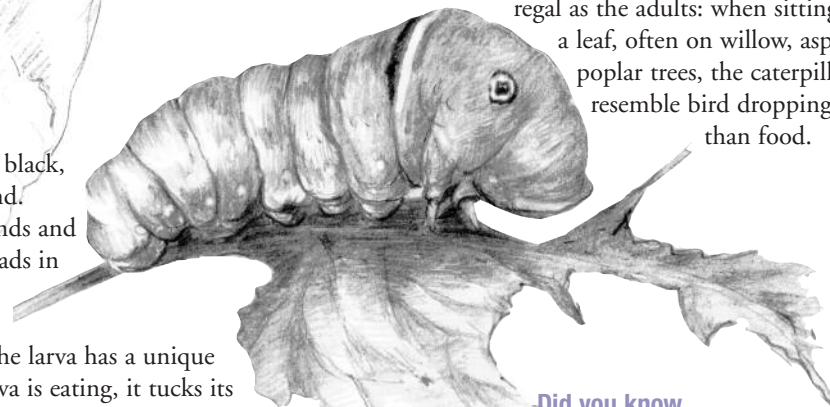




### The white admiral butterfly

The white admiral butterfly has dark, purple-black wings with wide bands of white about halfway between the body and the tips of the wings. These majestic butterflies often have blue, and sometimes red, spots between the white band and the edge of the wings. Found throughout the country in open areas near forests, white admirals are often seen sunning themselves with their wings open along the side of roads. These butterflies are rarely seen on flowers but can be found in and around rotting fruit and animal scat. Their caterpillars are not quite as

regal as the adults: when sitting still on a leaf, often on willow, aspen and poplar trees, the caterpillars resemble bird droppings rather than food.



### The eastern tiger swallowtail

The eastern tiger swallowtail is an appropriately named butterfly that has black, tiger-like stripes on a yellow background. This butterfly can be found in woodlands and fields, and flitting along the sides of roads in southern Ontario. If you look closely on tulip, cherry and ash trees, you will find the green larva of this butterfly. The larva has a unique way of intimidating prey: while the larva is eating, it tucks its head under its body, exposing two large fake eye spots on either side of the back of its head, making it look much larger than it is and, therefore, more difficult to catch and eat.

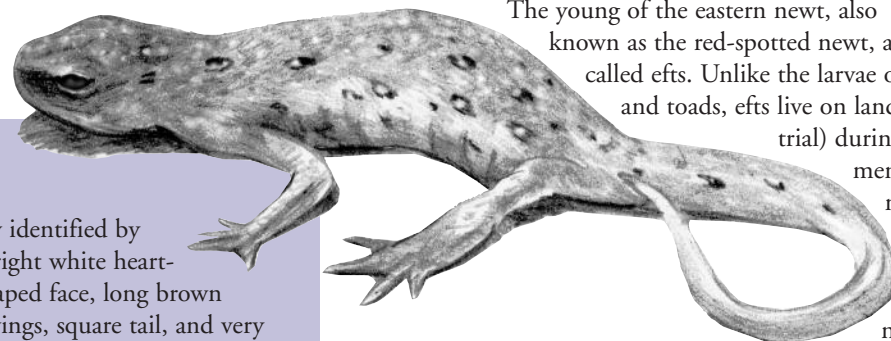
**Did you know ...** butterflies are cold-blooded, so they need to bask in the sun to warm their flight muscles before they can take to the skies.



### Barn Owls

Barn owls are easily identified by their bright white heart-shaped face, long brown wings, square tail, and very long legs. The babies are covered in soft, fuzzy down making them look like giant cotton balls on spindly legs. In the nest they bob, weave and duck like boxers to examine their surroundings. In 8 to 9 weeks they lose their downy feathers and develop the beautiful, brown speckled adult feathers.

**Did you know... a barn owl can eat up to 8 mice a day.**

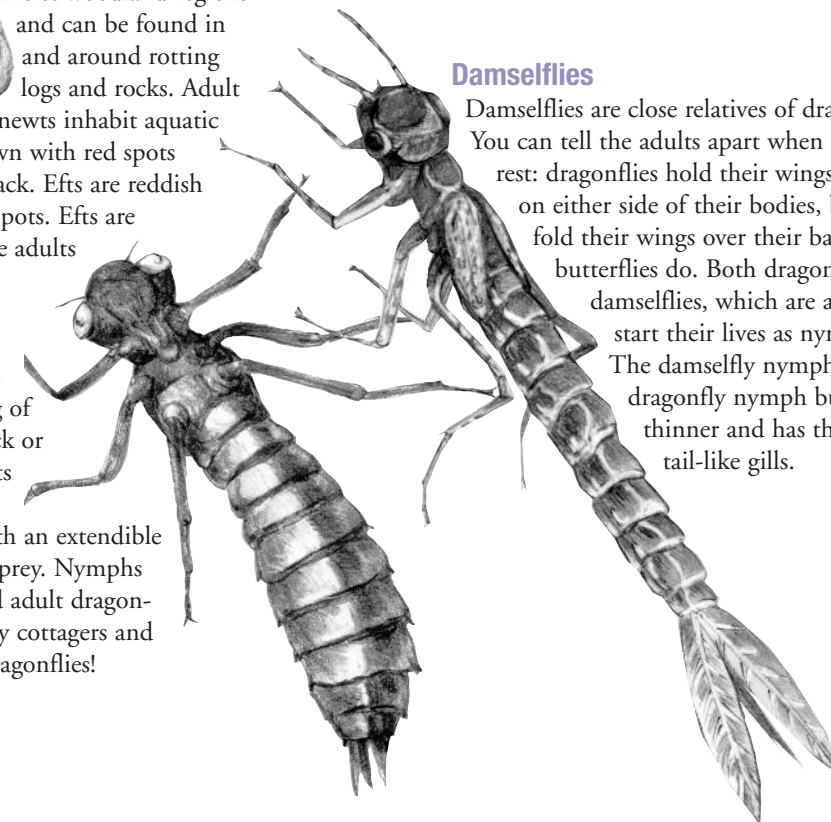


### Red efts

The young of the eastern newt, also known as the red-spotted newt, are called efts. Unlike the larvae of frogs and toads, efts live on land (are terrestrial) during the early developmental stage. They inhabit moist woodland regions and can be found in and around rotting logs and rocks. Adult newts inhabit aquatic areas and are yellow or greenish brown with red spots outlined in black on the sides and back. Efts are reddish orange with the same characteristic spots. Efts are about seven centimetres long and the adults are about double that length.

### Dragonflies

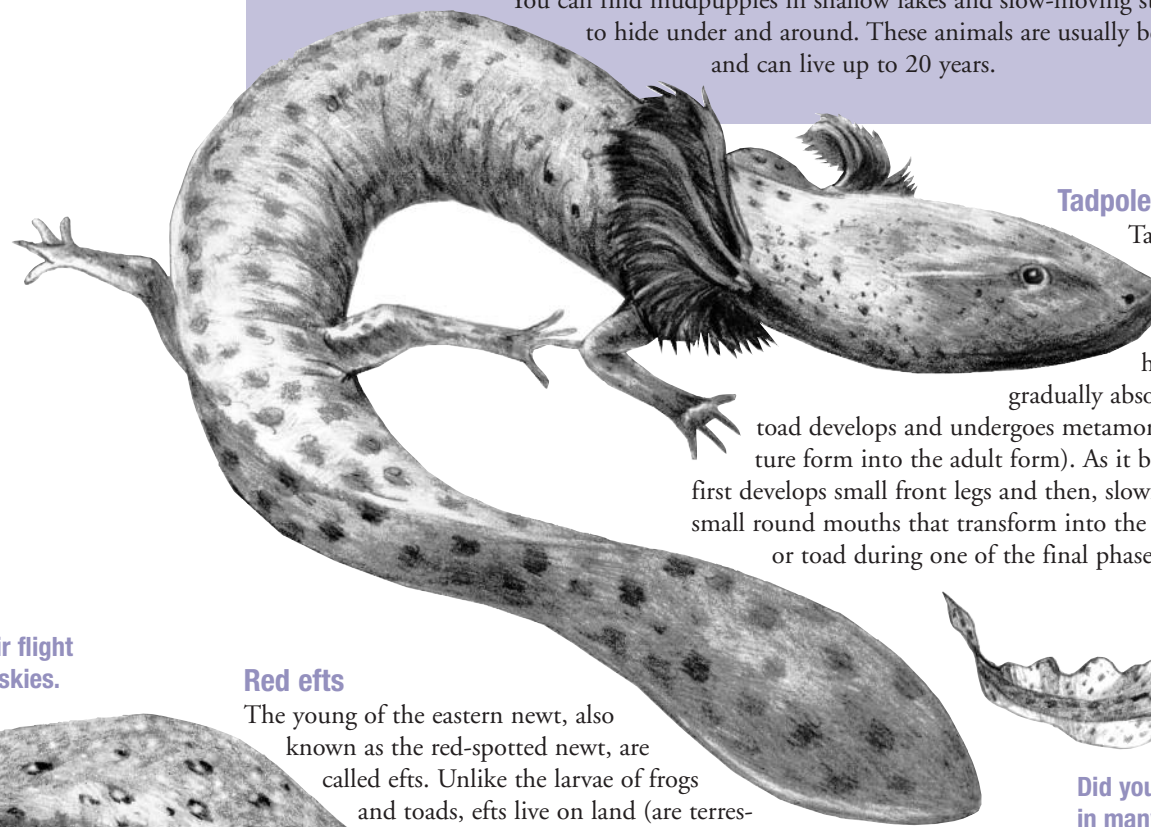
It's hard to believe that agile dragonflies start out life as a nymph (young of the species) that resembles a large tick or beetle. A dragonfly spends most of its life underwater in the nymph stage. The nymph is a ferocious hunter with an extendible jaw that easily catches unsuspecting prey. Nymphs prey mainly on mosquito larvae, and adult dragonflies eat adult mosquitoes. That's why cottagers and campers have so much respect for dragonflies!



### Mudpuppies

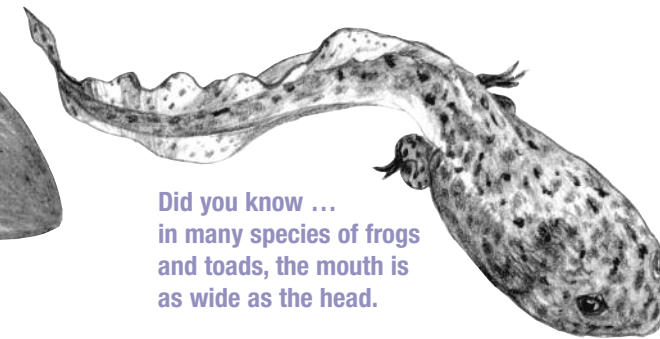
The mudpuppy is a type of salamander that matures from an aquatic larva (the immature form of the animal). Unlike other salamanders, however, the adult mudpuppy remains aquatic and does not have a terrestrial stage — that is, does not live on land. Like other salamanders, mudpuppies have lungs, but these strange creatures also have gills like fish do. The mudpuppy's gills, unlike those of fish, are on the outside of its body and look a bit like a bright red mane. These unique aquatic creatures, which lack eyelids and an upper jaw, have a face that only a mother could love!

You can find mudpuppies in shallow lakes and slow-moving streams that have lots of rocks for them to hide under and around. These animals are usually between 25 and 40 centimetres long and can live up to 20 years.



### Tadpoles

Tadpoles, or pollywogs, as they are sometimes called, are the fully aquatic larval stage of frogs and toads. Looking more like fish than frogs, tadpoles have a large, bulbous head and a long, translucent tail. The tail is gradually absorbed into the body as the young frog or toad develops and undergoes metamorphosis (the transformation from an immature form into the adult form). As it begins its change into an adult, the tadpole first develops small front legs and then, slowly, strong hind legs. Most tadpoles have small round mouths that transform into the characteristic wide mouth of the adult frog or toad during one of the final phases of metamorphosis.



**Did you know ...** in many species of frogs and toads, the mouth is as wide as the head.

### Damselflies

Damselflies are close relatives of dragonflies. You can tell the adults apart when they are at rest: dragonflies hold their wings straight out on either side of their bodies, but damselflies fold their wings over their backs like butterflies do. Both dragonflies and damselflies, which are agile fliers, start their lives as nymphs. The damselfly nymph resembles the dragonfly nymph but it is slightly thinner and has three long, tail-like gills.