

“Best school day of my life!”

In the spring of 2012, a truly remarkable event brought joy and learning to the young students of Ludvigsbergsskolan in Valbo. The students of classes 2b and 3b released their carefully raised painted lady butterflies (*Vanessa cardui*) on Butterfly Road in Grinduga—a moment of wonder and education they are unlikely to forget.



Throughout the spring, the children reared around 30 caterpillars, purchased from England through a program facilitated by Gävle Municipality. Under their care, the caterpillars grew, pupated, and eventually emerged as vibrant butterflies. The question arose: where would the butterflies take their first flight? The answer seemed natural—Butterfly Road in Grinduga, a habitat established five years earlier by Göran Sjöberg in collaboration with the County Administrative Board.

Göran, who attended the release event, was consulted about the ecological suitability of releasing these non-native butterflies. He reassured the group that the painted lady is a migratory species that naturally travels from southern Europe to Sweden each year. Releasing the butterflies posed no ecological threat. The alternative—ending their lives prematurely—was unthinkable, particularly as butterfly watching gains popularity.



The students' excitement was palpable as they opened the rearing enclosures and watched their butterflies flutter into the spring sky. Their enthusiasm is best captured by their own words:

“This was the best lesson this year!”

“This was the best school day of my life!”

Adding to the day’s magic, the students had the opportunity to observe and study native butterflies along Butterfly Road. Equipped with butterfly books designed by Göran and the County Administrative Board for educational purposes, the children identified species such as brimstones (*Gonepteryx rhamni*), orange tips (*Anthocharis cardamines*), green hairstreaks (*Callophrys rubi*), and peacock butterflies (*Aglais io*), among others.

Göran also shared tips on observing butterflies up close. He demonstrated how to gently catch them with a net, temporarily place them in a glass jar for closer study, and then release them unharmed—a hands-on approach that captivated the students and deepened their understanding of these delicate creatures.

The event was more than just a school outing; it was a celebration of nature, a lesson in stewardship, and a chance to inspire the next generation of butterfly enthusiasts. Butterfly Road, with its vibrant ecosystem, provided the perfect backdrop for an unforgettable day of discovery and joy.

