

Monarch Butterflies

What Are We?

Monarch butterflies are **insects**. They are in the order **Lepidoptera** which also includes moths.

What Do We Look Like?

The Monarch butterfly is one of the most recognizable and iconic North American butterflies. It has bright reddish-orange scaly wings outlined in black with two rows of white dots.

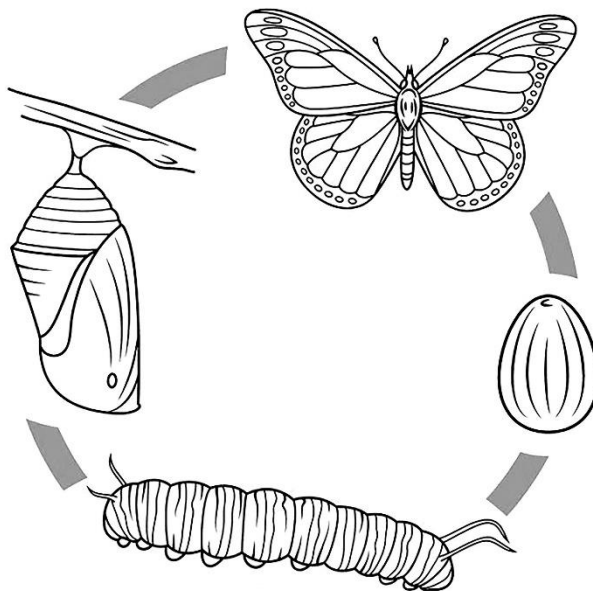
Monarch butterflies, like all insects, have three body parts – **head, thorax, and abdomen**. They have two **compound eyes, antennae, a proboscis**, six legs, and **wings covered with scales**.

How Do We Grow?

There are four stages the **lifecycle** of a Monarch butterfly: **egg, larva** (caterpillar), **pupa** (chrysalis), and **adult**.

1. Egg hatches on a leaf of a healthy plant.
2. The larva hatches and immediately begins eating. It eats so much plant matter that it outgrows its skin. The larva sheds its skin several times becoming bigger each time. This is called an **instar**.
3. When the larva is ready, it makes a thick skin which becomes the pupa. Inside of the pupa, the butterfly is going through a **metamorphosis**, or transformation.
4. The adult butterfly emerges.

Color and label the stages in the lifecycle



Where Do We Live?

Monarch butterflies live in warm places around the world and are native to North and South America. They can also be commonly seen in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean and Spain.

What Do We Eat?

Monarch caterpillars feed on the milkweed plant, which is why they are sometimes called "milkweed butterflies." Adults feed on nectar from goldenrod, yarrow, aster, and wild bergamot.

What Are My Natural Predators?

Yellow jackets, ants, paper wasps, spiders, mantids, lizards, mice, toads, and birds.

How Do I Survive?

An **adaptation** is a change to an animal's body that helps it survive in its habitat. The milkweed that Monarch caterpillars feed on is poisonous to most birds. The reddish-orange of the wings provides camouflage against flowers as it feeds on nectar and is a warning that the Monarch is poisonous.

Did You Know...

- Monarchs are famous for their **migration** from the US and Canada to California and Mexico for the winter.
- Only the male monarchs have a black mark in the middle of each rear wing.
- Monarchs are **diurnal** – they are active during the day.
- Depending on the region, the monarch is also called king of the butterflies, milkweed butterfly, common tiger butterfly, wanderer butterfly, and black veined brown butterfly.
- Monarch larvae will eat each other after hatching.
- Monarchs have a wingspan of 3 – 4 inches.
- Scales overlap like shingles on a roof and provide insulation, camouflaging colors and patterns, and aid in flight.
- Keen senses of smell and vision help the Monarch to assess its environment.
- A Monarch's wings flap slower than many other butterflies at about **300 to 720 times a minute**.
- Monarchs can fly at speeds between **4 to 12 miles an hour**.
- The Viceroy butterfly **mimics** the Monarch to keep from being eaten.
- Human activity threatens Monarchs. Climate change (extreme weather and drastic changes in temperatures), the use of herbicides (killing of main food source-milkweed), and the destruction of over-wintering sanctuaries by logging and mining industries have negative impacts on the Monarch.

Monarch and Flower

To make this nectar-loving Monarch you will need:

Monarch template (below)

Orange pencils, markers, or crayons

White paper plate or white paper

Paint or markers for designing flower

Scissors

Glue

