

Monarch Butterfly

 **DOMAIN**
Eukarya

 **KINGDOM**
Animalia

 **PHYLUM**
Arthropoda

 **CLASS**
Insecta

 **ORDER**
Lepidoptera

 **FAMILY**
Nymphalidae

 **GENUS**
Danaus

 **SPECIES**
D. plexippus plexippus

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Monarch butterflies are found in Asia, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South America, Central America, and North America. They are commonly found in gardens, meadows, and prairies.



WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE AND HOW BIG THEY ARE

A monarch butterfly's wingspan is 3.7 to 4.1 inches. It is bright orange with black veins, a black border, and two rows of white spots along the edges. Females have thicker, darker veins compared to males, while males can be identified by a small black scent gland on their hindwings. Their bold coloring warns predators that they are toxic to eat. They are very light, weighing about 0.0095 to 0.026 oz. Caterpillars are striped in white, black, and yellow-green. After several molts, the caterpillar reaches about two inches in length.



WHAT'S ON THE MENU?



Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed, which provides them with a toxic defense against predators. As larvae, they have a herbivorous diet, meaning they eat only plant matter. As adults they drink nectar from a variety of flowers, including milkweeds, clovers, and goldenrods.



Extinct
EX EW CR **EN** VU NT LC
Threatened
Least Concern

FAMILY LIFE

Monarch butterflies typically live 2 to 6 weeks, but the final "super generation" can live up to 6 to 8 months. At the end of winter, monarchs mate in their overwintering sites in California and Mexico. Females then begin moving north, laying their eggs on milkweed plants. While males do not die immediately after mating, both sexes eventually die as the next generation begins. Upon hatching, caterpillars emerge and spend about two weeks feeding before continuing their transformation.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

Monarch butterflies migrate up to 2,500 miles, traveling as far as 80 miles a day from the United States and Canada to Mexico or Southern California. This migration is unique to North American populations, and many return to the same overwintering sites each year. Their numbers once reached the billions but have declined in recent decades.



THREATS TO THEIR SURVIVAL



Habitat
Destruction



Pesticides



Climate
Change

Habitat destruction is the main threat to their survival. Pesticides used in farming practices kill both the butterflies and the milkweed plants. Droughts and hurricanes are very common along their migration route. Land development along their migration path reduces the number of available flowers. Climate change triggers migration early, before milkweed plants bloom.



BY USFNMIDWEST - STAGES OF MONARCH DEVELOPMENT - EGG TO CHRYSALIS.
PUBLIC DOMAIN, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=49204507>



Did you
know?

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY



A group of Monarchs are called a flutter



Four generations of monarchs occur every year



Depending on where it is located, the size of the body and wings differ



They have internal compasses that help guide them even after getting knocked off course



The scientific name means sleep transformation in Greek



There are two different populations: eastern and western



Monarchs have been successfully bred on the International Space Station

