

0. The Monarch's Journey Begins - Story Preface

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2. The Monarch's Journey Begins

3. The Migration of Monarch Butterflies

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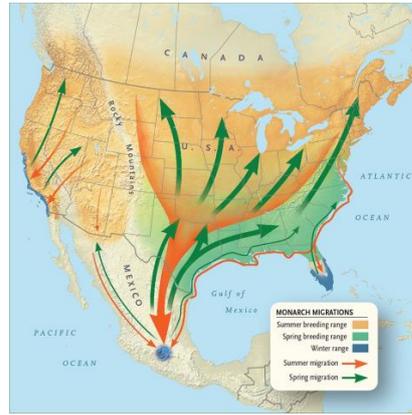
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A migrating Monarch's journey starts in the spring as it travels north, following the same path as its predecessors did. We could call this the first generation.

Monarchs eat—their favorite food, at the adult stage, is nectar (from flowers) and juice (from various fruits)—and breed and lay eggs (on milkweed plants) that metamorphose into the second generation. The eggs laid by the first generation hatch into baby caterpillars (milkweed-eating larvae) after about four days, typically entering the world in the warm months of May and June.

The larvae spend the next weeks eating and growing until they find a place to turn into a chrysalis (or pupa).



About ten days later, the Monarch butterfly emerges, dries its wings and flies away. It will feed on the nectar of flowers and fly around for its short life span (between two to six weeks).



If there isn't any milkweed for the larvae to eat, they will die and the multi-stage journey is never completed.

If there is milkweed, and the larve has sufficient food to become an adult butterfly, the second-generation Monarchs mate. The female chooses a plant on which to lay her eggs, on milkweed leaves, and then she dies. When the eggs hatch, they go through the same cycle of metamorphosis as their "parents."

If they survive, those third-generation eggs will hatch in July or August. Third-generation Monarchs also live from two-to-six weeks as they race to complete their part of the journey.

Finally, the fourth generation is born. This is usually in September or October. Fourth-generation Monarchs have the longest life span and most complete the trip started by the first generations months before. Instead of dying after a few weeks, this generation can live up to eight months as they finish the journey.

Fourth-generation Monarchs instinctively know that when the weather turns cold it's time to head south. Flying an average of 80 miles a day, they complete their trip home—to Mexico or Southern California—in about two months. They will live between six and eight months, then the whole process starts all over again.

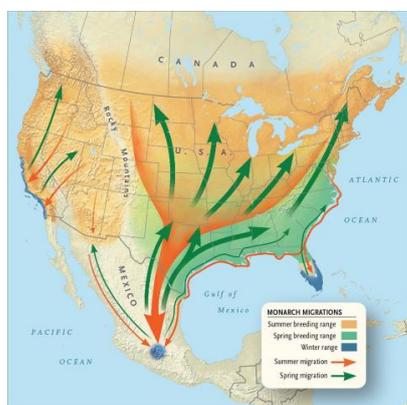
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Media Stream



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