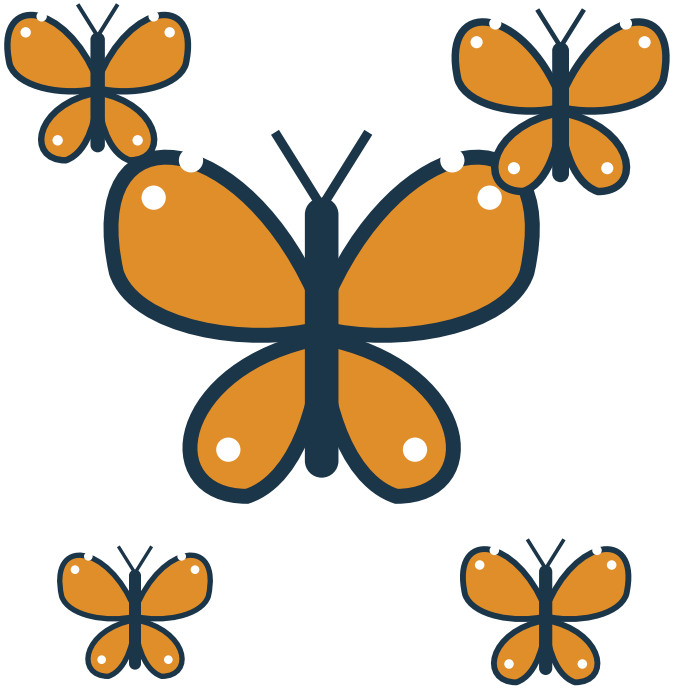
The Great Monarch Journey

A nonfiction mini book

4th Grade

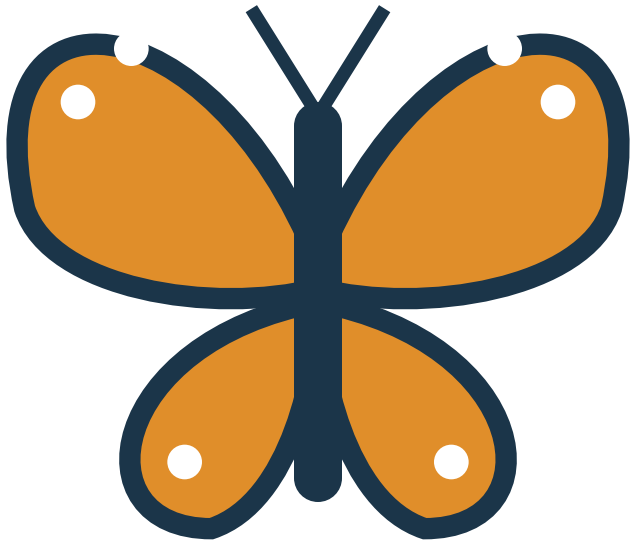


Read it. Talk about it. Then go outside and look!

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1 Meet the Monarch

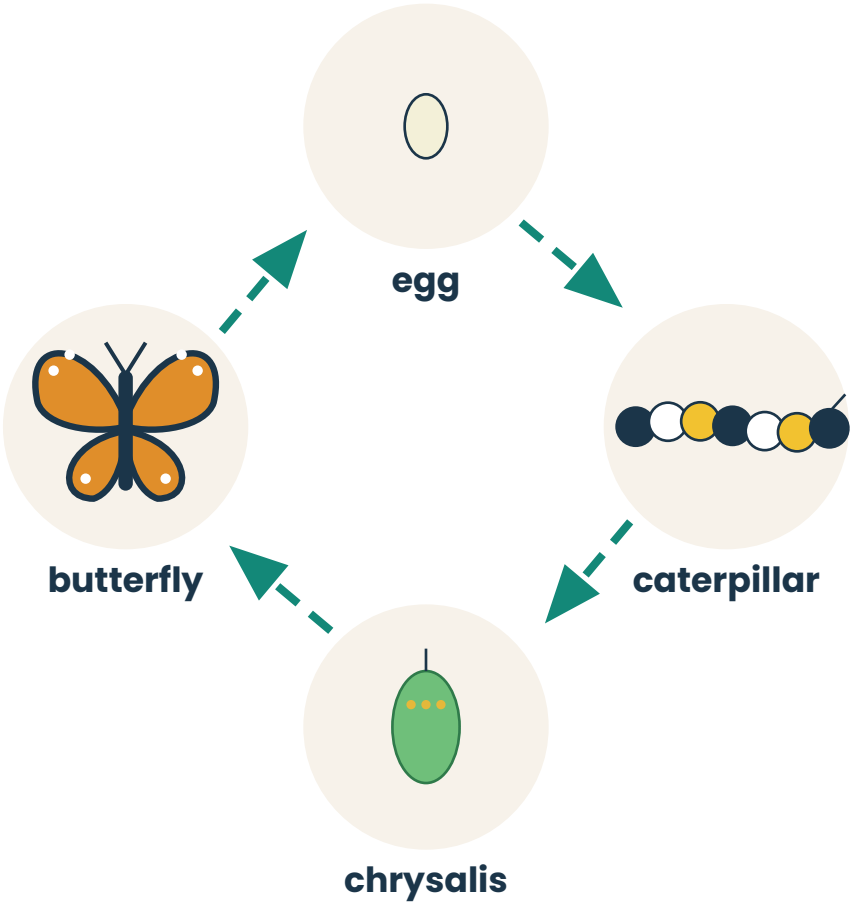
The monarch is a butterfly with bright orange wings, black lines and white dots along the edges. Those bright colors send a message to hungry birds: **Stay away!**



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2 Four Life Stages

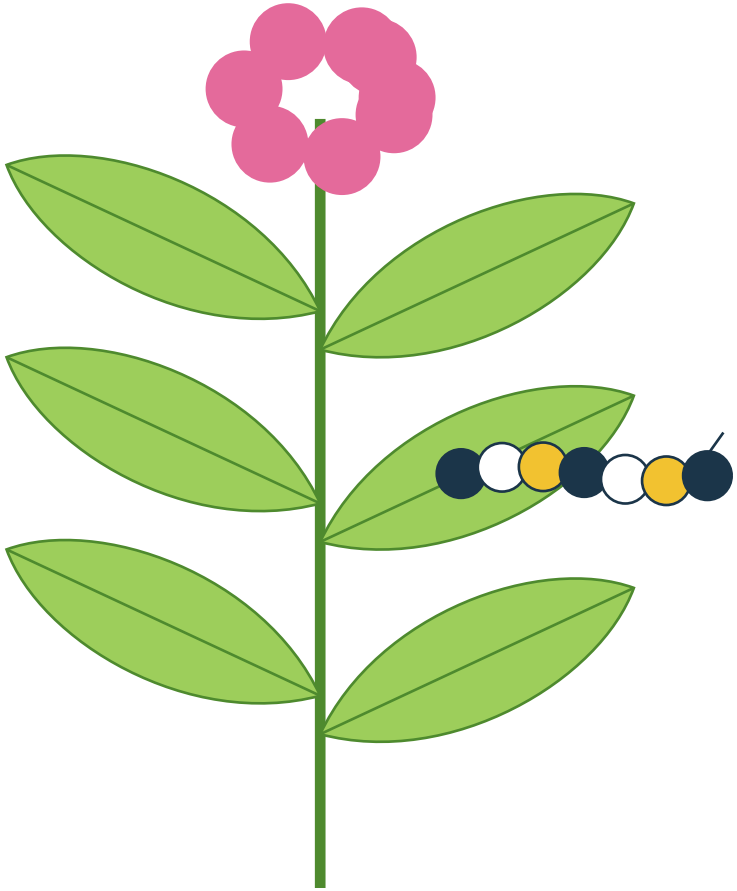
A monarch grows in four stages: **egg**, **caterpillar** (larva), **chrysalis** (pupa) and **adult butterfly**. Going from a tiny egg to a butterfly takes about one month.



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3 Milkweed Matters

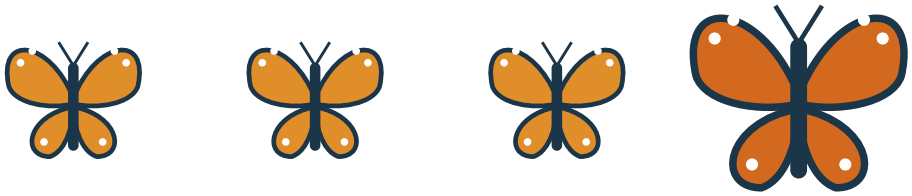
A mother monarch lays her eggs only on **milkweed** plants. Milkweed is the only food monarch caterpillars eat. It holds a bitter poison that makes monarchs taste bad to many predators.



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4 A Special Fall Generation

Most summer monarchs live only 2 to 6 weeks. The monarchs that become butterflies in late summer are different. They can live for about **8 months**! People call them the "super generation."



June	**July**	**August**	**Sept.**
2-6 weeks	2-6 weeks	2-6 weeks	8 months

the "super generation"

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5 The Long Trip South

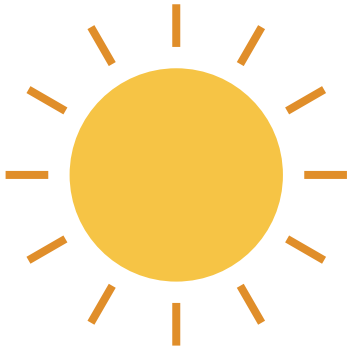
In fall, monarchs in eastern North America fly south. Some travel up to **3,000 miles** (about 4,800 kilometers), from Canada and the northern United States to the mountains of central Mexico.

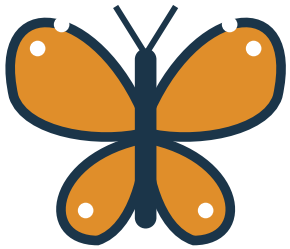


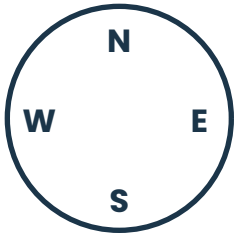
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6 Finding the Way

None of these butterflies has made the trip before, yet they find the way! Monarchs use the **sun** like a compass. Scientists think they may also sense Earth's **magnetic field**.



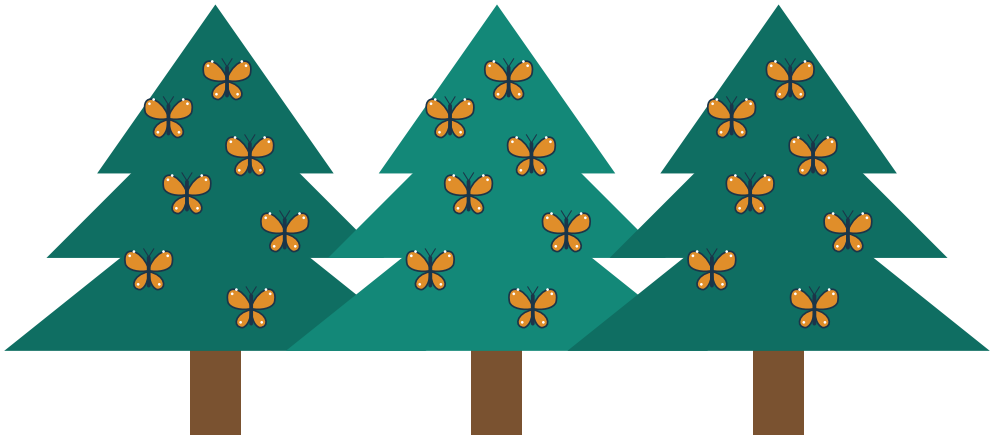




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7 Winter in the Fir Forest

Monarchs spend the winter in cool mountain forests of **oyamel fir** trees. Millions of butterflies cluster together on the branches. Huddling close helps them stay safe through the cold months.



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8 Arriving for Día de los Muertos

The monarchs often reach Mexico in late October and early November, around **Día de los Muertos** (Day of the Dead). On this holiday, families remember loved ones who have died with marigolds, candles and photos.

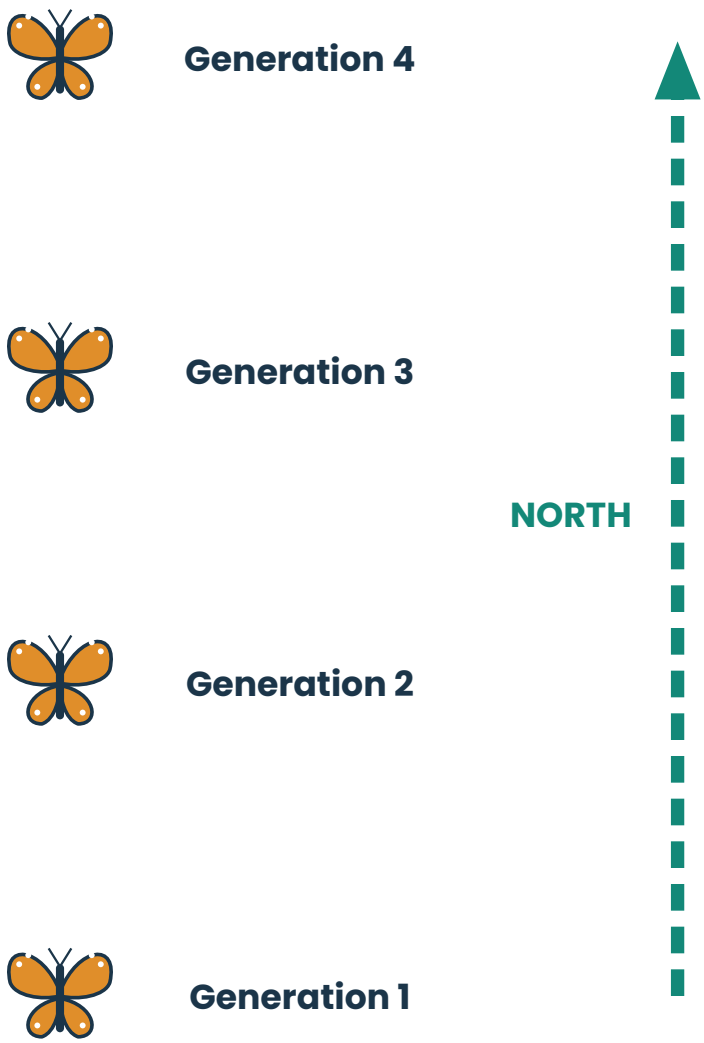




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9 The Trip North

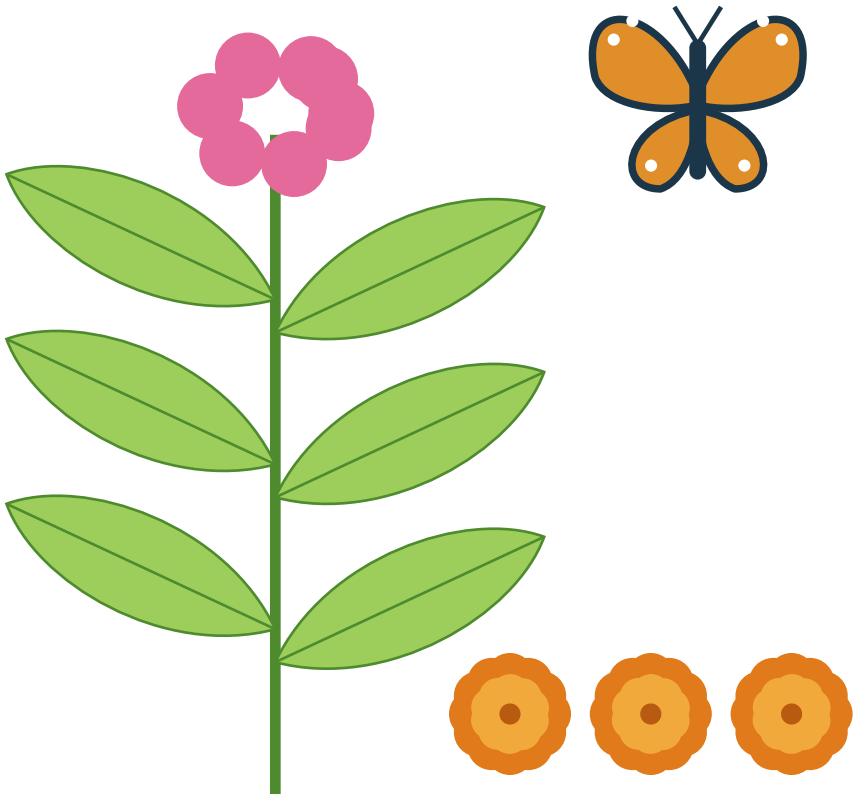
In spring, the monarchs fly north and lay eggs on milkweed. Their children and grandchildren keep going. It takes about **four generations** to get all the way back to Canada!



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10 How You Can Help

Plant native milkweed and nectar flowers. Skip bug sprays in your garden. Keep a journal of the monarchs you see. Small actions help this amazing journey continue!



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Check Your Understanding

1. What is the only food monarch caterpillars eat?

2. Name the four life stages of a monarch, in order.

3. How long can a "super generation" monarch live?

4. Where do eastern monarchs spend the winter?

5. Name one way monarchs find their way.

6. About how many generations does the trip north take?

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Answer Key

1. What is the only food monarch caterpillars eat?
milkweed

2. Name the four life stages of a monarch, in order.
egg, caterpillar (larva), chrysalis (pupa), adult butterfly

3. How long can a "super generation" monarch live?
about 8 months

4. Where do eastern monarchs spend the winter?
in oyamel fir forests in the mountains of central Mexico

5. Name one way monarchs find their way.
they use the sun like a compass (and may sense Earth's magnetic field)

6. About how many generations does the trip north take?
about four generations

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