



The Monarch



The Monarch is one of the best-known butterfly species around the world. In Canada, it can be found in almost all provinces except Newfoundland.



The Monarch relies on milkweed plants for breeding and is found where milkweed grows. Standard types of milkweed plants are Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). The Monarch eggs are cream or white-coloured with ridges running from top to bottom. They are the size of a pencil tip and are usually laid on the underside of milkweed leaves. As a caterpillar, the Monarch is distinctively white, yellow, and black-banded. It transforms into a large, showy butterfly with orange and black wings, bordered with white spots.

Q&A



1. Why do Monarchs have such incredible colour?

Answer: It's a form of warning to predators that they are poisonous or distasteful...So keep your distance!

2. How long does a monarch live?

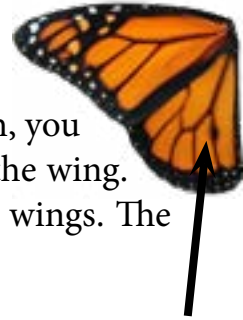
Answer: 2 to 6 weeks. However, the generation that migrates south can live up to 8 months. They are called the super generation.

3. Can I raise my own monarchs in Canada?

Answer: Yes, you can, however, supporting the monarchs' natural habitat and supporting conservation efforts will help the species more.

4. Is there a Female and Male Monarch?

Answer: Yes, there is a female and male monarch, you can tell the difference by the colour pattern on the wing. A male butterfly will have a black spot on their wings. The female monarch does not.



5. Are monarchs dangerous?

Answer: Monarchs are poisonous but not venomous. They are not dangerous for people.

6. Can you touch a monarch?

Answer: Yes, you can, that said, you must be very careful and be as gentle as possible not to damage their delicate wings.

So it is best just to leave them alone and view them from a distance.

7. What is the biggest threat to monarchs?

Answer: Habitat destruction is one of the issues. There is also the use of insecticides and herbicides in the USA and Canada. Last would be the effects of climate change. Basically it is an up hill battle for the monarch, they need our help.



8. What does it mean if a monarch sits on you or lands on you?

Answer: It is said that when a monarch lands on you it symbolizes change, joy, hope, new beginning and freedom. However, this is not the view of the scientific community, but it is nice to think such an event is something special.



Migration



Unlike most butterflies, the Monarch migrates every year to and from Canada to several different locations. Monarchs migrate south to spend the winter in California and in Mexico. The ones we have in New Brunswick migrate to and from the mountains of Central Mexico. The Monarch typically begins its migration southward in late summer or the fall and return to Canada in May or June of each year. Although the average lifespan of the Monarch is only 2 to 6 weeks.



The migrating generation can live up to 6 to 7 months through the fall and winter.

The most interesting part about the monarchs is that the individual Monarchs leaving Canada in the late summer or fall are not the same Monarchs that return in the spring. In some cases, the Monarchs that arrive in Canada in the spring could be the second generation after departing Mexico.

The Monarch lives and helps pollinate during the spring and summer in Canada. The adult monarch feeds on flower nectar, and by doing so they transfer pollen from one flowering plant to another. This fertilizes the plants so they can produce the seeds and fruit we recognize and consume. Without pollinators, many crops and wildflowers would have difficulty surviving.



Protecting Monarchs and their habitat contributes to the conservation of biodiversity of Canada. (**Go Green**)

Sources of information

Government Of Canada

Monarch Butterfly:

Profile of a species at risk.

