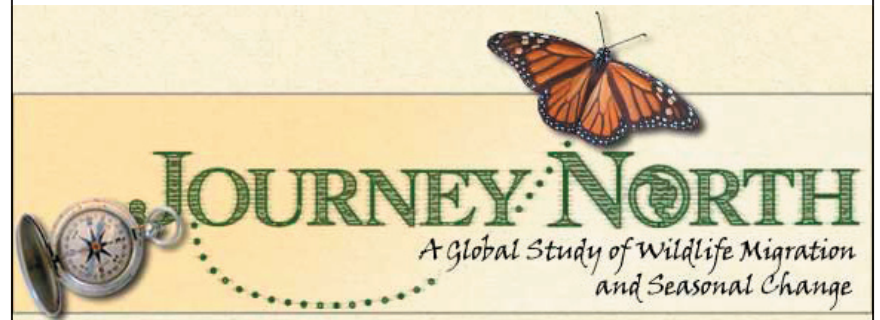
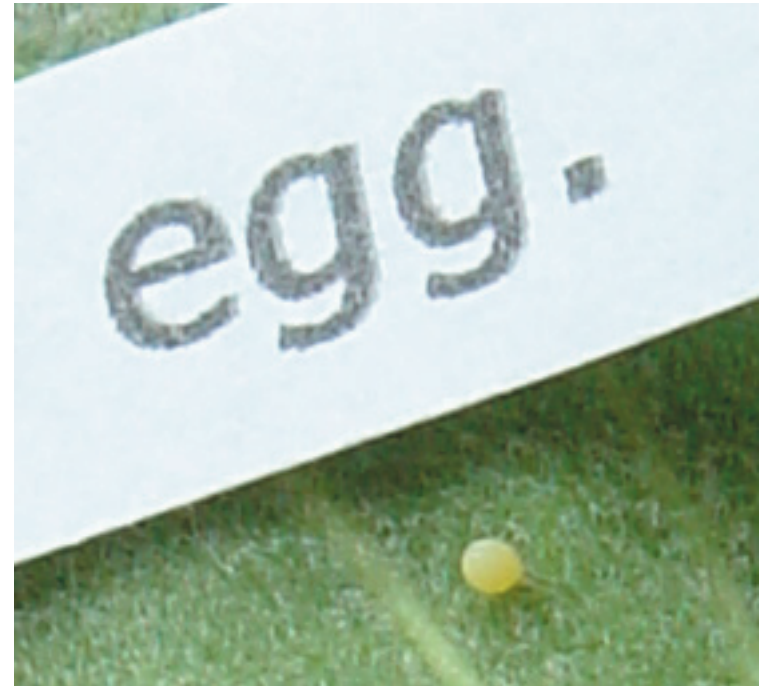




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The Life Cycle of the Monarch Butterfly



by Elizabeth Howard

The Egg

This is a monarch butterfly egg. It is not much bigger than the head of a pin!

A monarch is an egg for 3-8 days.



Can you find the monarch egg?

Female monarch butterflies lay their eggs only on **milkweed** plants. When the eggs hatch, milkweed is the *only* food monarch caterpillars eat.



Milkweed is the only place to find monarch eggs.

The Caterpillar (or Larva)

This monarch butterfly hatched just a few minutes ago. It is eating its own shell. Nothing is wasted in nature! A monarch is a caterpillar for 7-17 days.



Caterpillar or larva? Both are correct.

- **Larva** is the scientific word for caterpillar.
- **Larvae** is the plural of larva. So, *larvae* means *caterpillars*.

Eating and Growing

Monarchs spend the caterpillar stage of their lives eating and growing. This monarch ate the leaf it was standing on. It took only 20 minutes!



*Eat and grow! Eat and grow! Eat and grow!
Eat and grow! Eat and grow! Eat and grow!
Eat and grow! Eat and grow! Eat and grow!
Eat and grow! Eat and grow! Eat and grow!
Eat and grow! Eat and grow! Eat and grow!
Eat and grow! Eat and grow! Eat and grow!*

Can you find two?

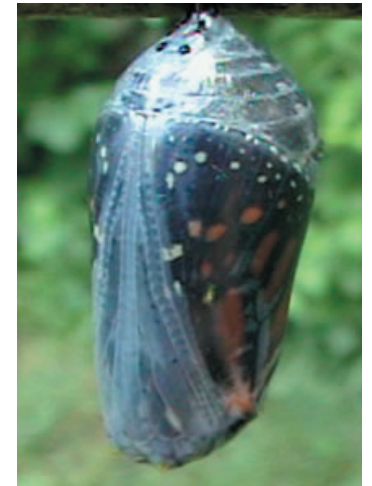
There are two caterpillars in the picture below. Monarchs can grow this much in only two weeks!



A monarch grows 2,000 times bigger while it is a caterpillar.

The Chrysalis

Next, the hungry caterpillar turns into a chrysalis. A monarch is a chrysalis for 8-15 days. The butterfly's beautiful orange and black wings appear the day before it is born.



The changes that happen inside a chrysalis are like magic. "It's like a mouse turning into a hummingbird," says monarch scientist Dr. Lincoln Brower.

The Adult

This butterfly just came out of its chrysalis. It is about to stretch its wings and fly.



Within days, the males and females mate. The females lay their tiny eggs and the life cycle begins again.

How long do adult monarchs live?

It depends on when they are born:

- Most monarchs are born in the spring and summer. *They live for only 2-6 weeks!*
- Monarchs that are born in late summer are different. These are the monarchs that migrate to Mexico for the winter. *They may live up to 8 months.*

