The Butterfly Life Cycle

A Watercolor Field Guide for Young Naturalists



28 Printable Pages

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A Watercolor Field Guide for Young Naturalists

PUBLISHED BY

INKLINGS WORLD

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How to Use This Packet

Thank you for downloading this packet. Everything inside was drawn and written by hand at Inklings World, and every fact has been checked against published scientific sources - national parks, wildlife agencies and natural history museums. You can teach from it with confidence.

What you downloaded

Your download may arrive as more than one file. That is not a mistake. A single file would have meant compressing the watercolor and losing detail in the printing, so we split it instead. Print the parts in order and they run straight through as one packet - page numbers continue from one part to the next.

Printing

The one setting that matters

Print at 100% or 'Actual size' - never 'Fit to page'. Fit to page shrinks everything slightly, which throws off the ruler on the measuring pages and stops the cut-out pieces fitting together.

- Print single-sided. Several pages get cut apart, and anything on the back is lost.
- Plain paper is fine for the reading and writing pages.
- Use cardstock for the cut-and-assemble pages. They survive being put away and taken out again.
- Printing on A4? It works - choose Fit to page for those pages only, and note the ruler will read very slightly short.
- You do not have to print all of it. Most families print six or eight pages at a time.

The kinds of pages inside

Reading pages - a short passage with a picture, then questions with lines to write on. Read the passage aloud together first. For a younger child, let them answer out loud and write it for them; the science is the point, not the handwriting. About 10 minutes.

Labeling pages - a large accurate illustration with lines pointing to its parts. These come in pairs: one with a word bank of answers at the bottom, one with no word bank. Use the word-bank version first and save the blank one for a few days later as a check. You do not have to use both. About 10 minutes.

Vocabulary and tracing pages - matching words to meanings, and handwriting practice on the words from the unit. These are the quiet pages. 5 to 10 minutes.

Cut-and-assemble pages - anything with dashed lines is meant to be cut. Sorting cards are cut out and placed into the boxes on the page above; no glue is needed unless you want it. Sorting them, talking about it and sorting them again is the activity.

Assembling the life cycle wheel

1. Cut out both circles along the dashed edge. 2. On the cover circle, cut away the shaded wedge - that is the window. 3. Lay the cover on the wheel, lining up the small centre circles. 4. Push a split pin through the middle. 5. Turn the top circle and one stage appears at a time, in order.

Print the wheel on cardstock if you can, and expect to help with the cutting for children under seven. About 20 minutes including the cutting.

The kinds of pages inside, continued

Measuring and counting pages - real measurement with a real ruler, and simple arithmetic using what they have just learned. These are the pages that need Actual size printing, or the ruler will not be true. About 15 minutes.

Field notes - a blank observation page, laid out the way a working naturalist's notebook is. This is our favourite page and the one we would encourage you not to skip. Take it outside. There is no right answer on it: the skill being practised is looking carefully and writing down what you actually saw, which is the foundation of every science that follows. Print several copies.

Answer key - the last page. Print it separately, or leave it on a screen while your child works on paper.

How to work through it

There is no fixed schedule and you cannot do it wrong, but the packet was designed to build: later pages assume the vocabulary from earlier ones. One or two pages a sitting suits it best. Reading page first, then the activity that follows it - they are paired deliberately. Finish with the review page, then go outside with the field notes.

For mixed ages: give the older child the no-word-bank version of a labeling page while the younger one does the word-bank version of the same picture. Same lesson, two levels, one table.

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If something is not right

If a page will not print properly, a file will not open, or something looks wrong, message us through the shop and we will send a corrected file. If you find a factual error, please tell us - we check every fact before a packet goes out, but if something has slipped past we want to correct it for everyone.

Meet the Monarch



The monarch butterfly begins life as an egg no bigger than a pinhead. In about thirty days it becomes a butterfly strong enough to fly across a continent. This packet follows every step of that journey.

Look Closely

A monarch has four wings, six legs, and two antennae with a small club at each tip.

The Four Stages

Write each stage on the line below its picture.



_____



_____



_____



_____

Word Bank

egg caterpillar chrysalis butterfly

The Four Stages

Can you name each stage without help?



_____



_____



_____

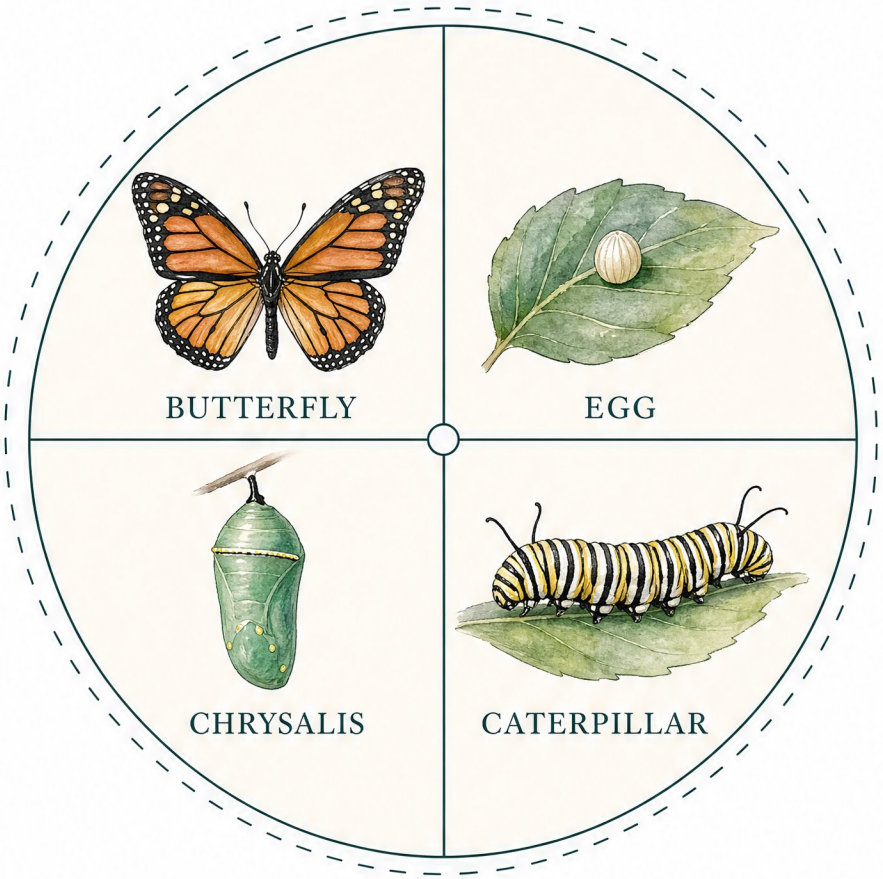


_____

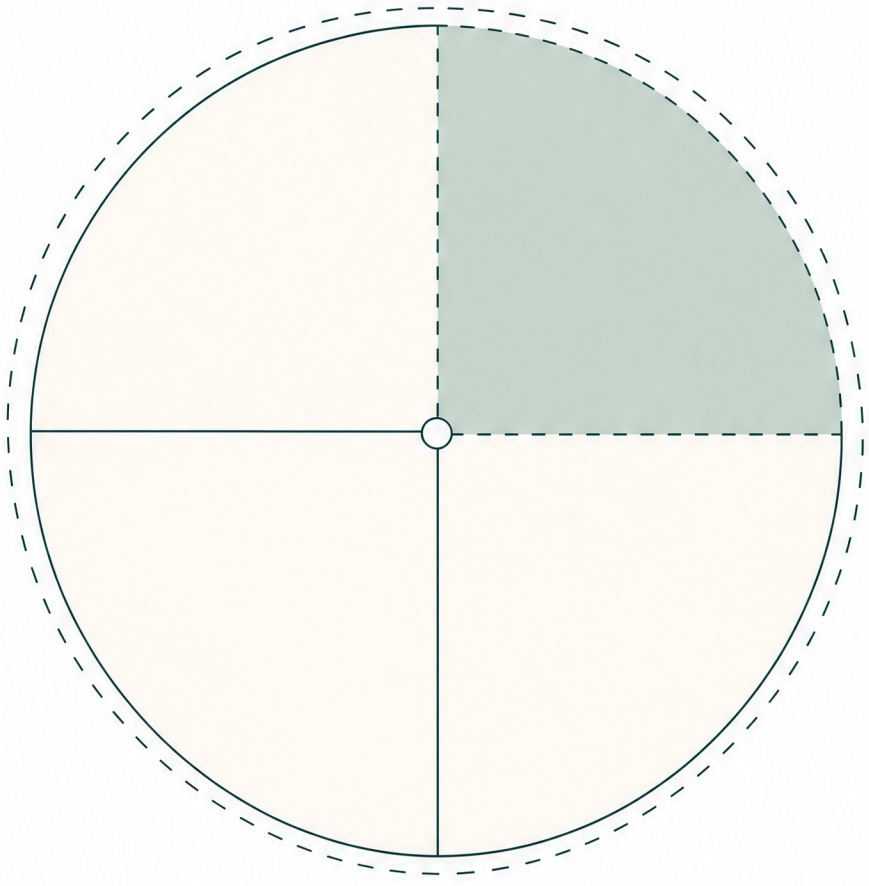
Life Cycle Wheel

Cut out both circles. Cut away the shaded wedge on the cover. Fasten them together in the centre.

Wheel



Cover



The Egg



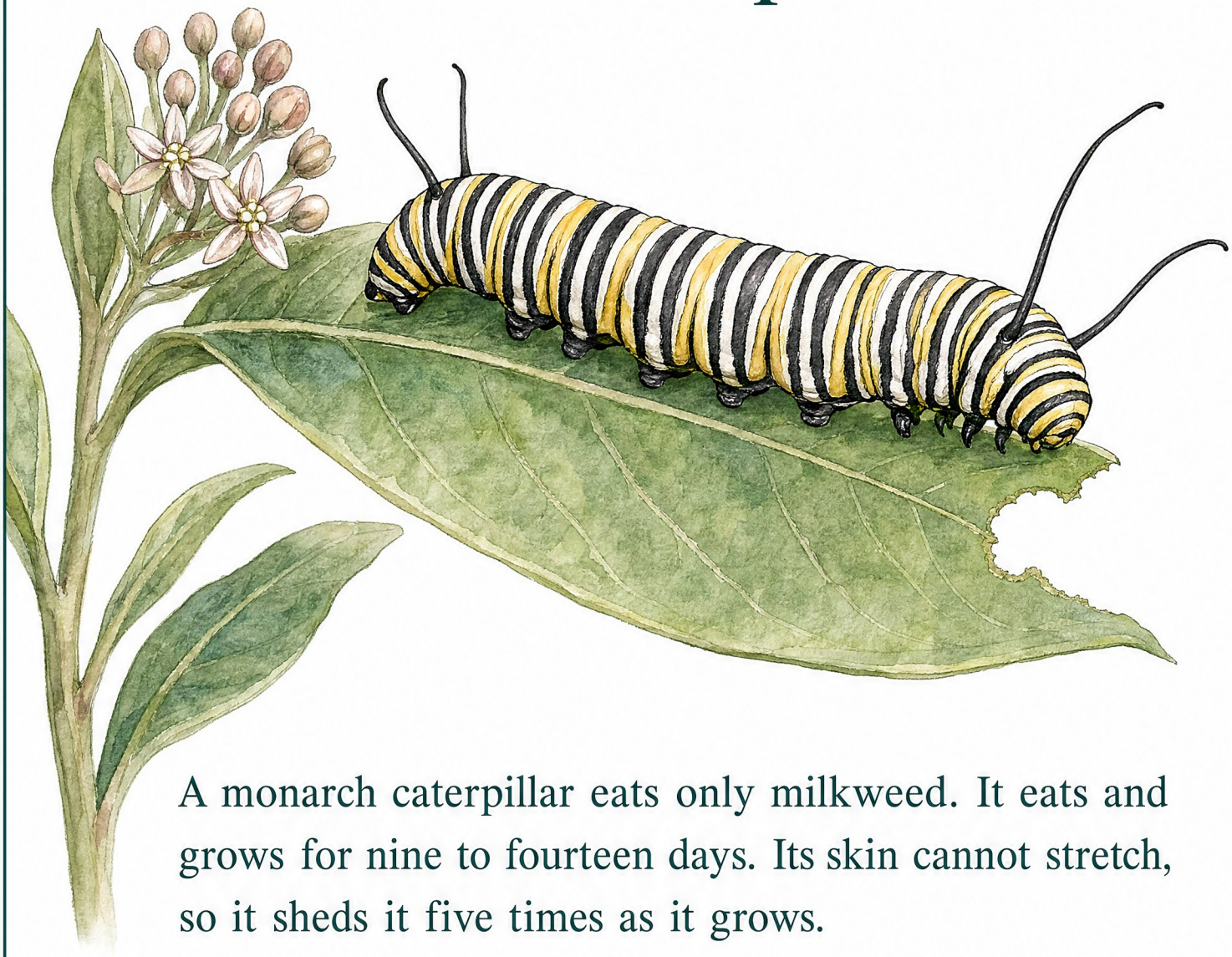
A monarch mother lays one small egg at a time on a milkweed leaf. The egg is no bigger than a pinhead. About four days later, a tiny caterpillar chews its way out.

Questions

1. Where does a monarch lay her eggs?

2. How many days until the egg hatches?

The Caterpillar



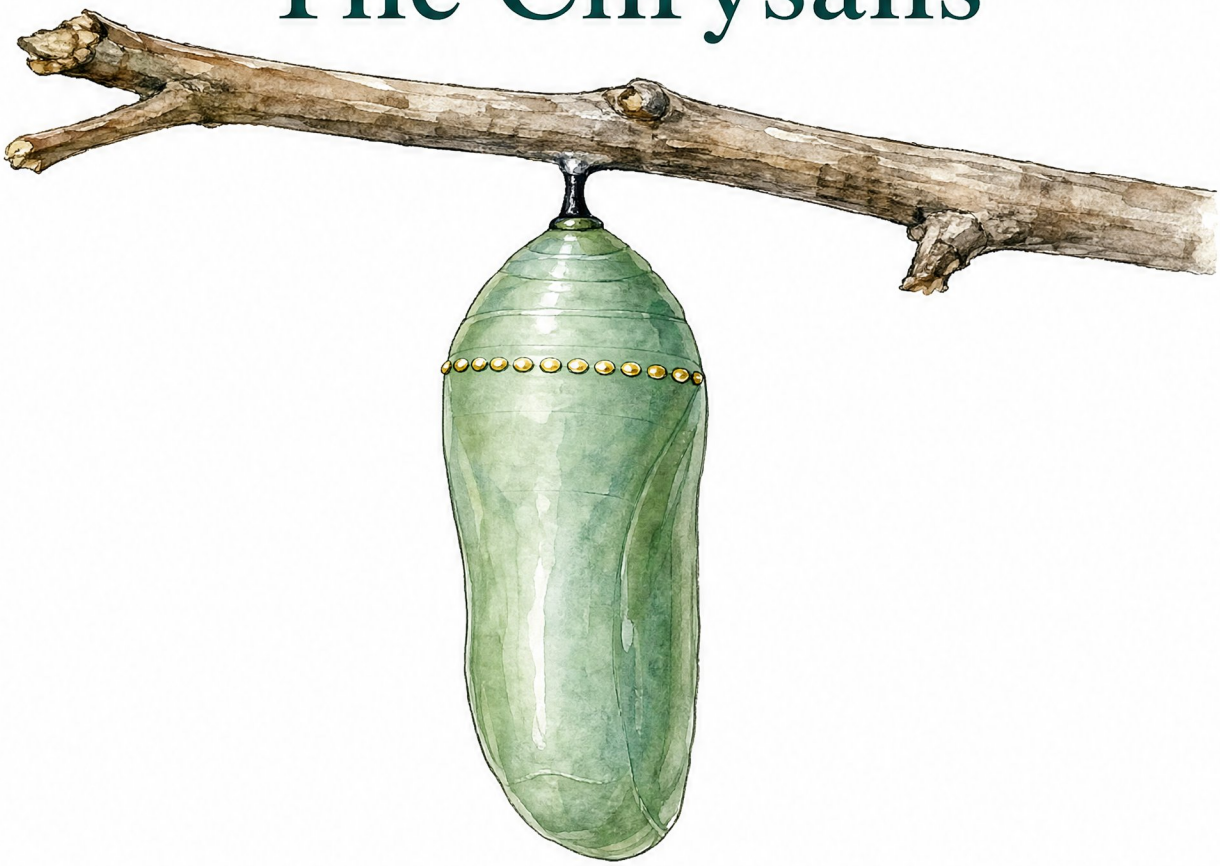
A monarch caterpillar eats only milkweed. It eats and grows for nine to fourteen days. Its skin cannot stretch, so it sheds it five times as it grows.

Questions

1. What does a monarch caterpillar eat?

2. How many times does it shed its skin?

The Chrysalis



The caterpillar hangs upside down and sheds its skin one last time. Underneath is a smooth green chrysalis. Inside, its body slowly breaks down and rebuilds into a butterfly. This takes one to two weeks.

Questions

1. What colour is a monarch chrysalis?

2. How long does the caterpillar stay inside?

The Butterfly



When the butterfly comes out, its wings are small and crumpled. It pumps fluid into them until they are wide and strong. Most monarchs live three to six weeks. But the ones born at the end of summer live for months, because they have somewhere far to go.

Questions

1. What do the wings look like at first?

_____

_____

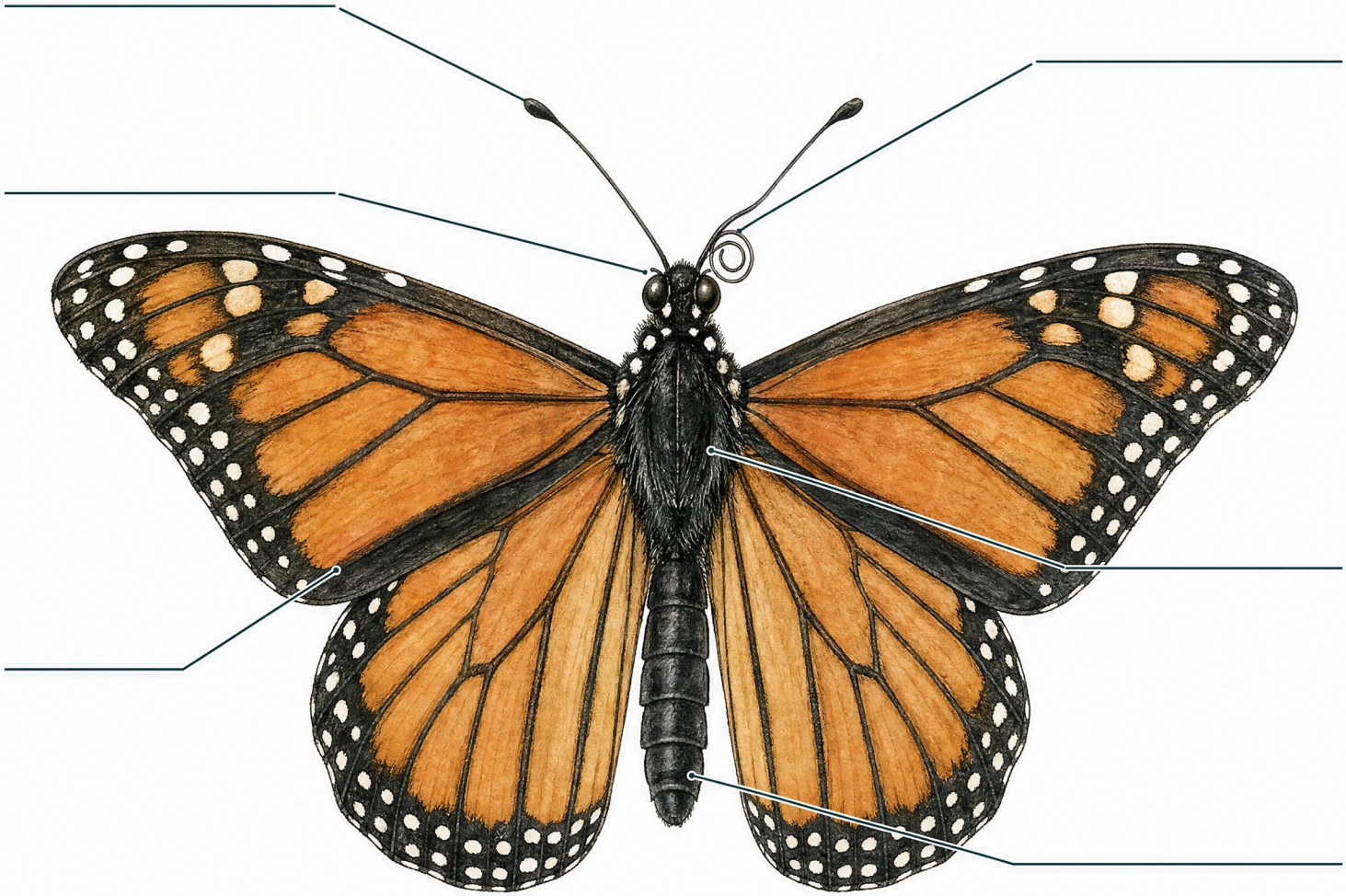
2. How long does a summer monarch live?

_____

_____

Parts of a Butterfly

Write each word on the correct line.

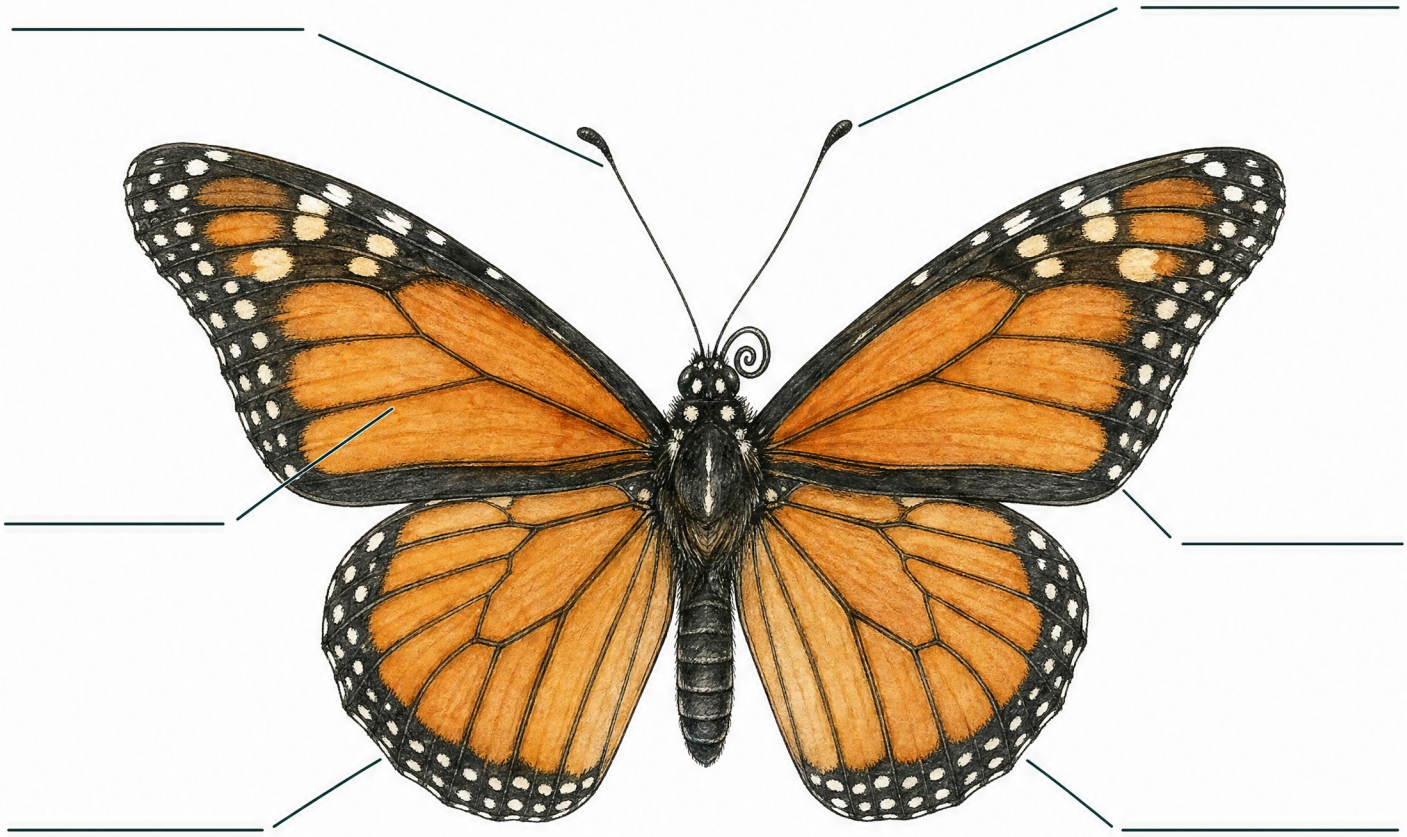


Word Bank

head	thorax	abdomen
antenna	wing	proboscis

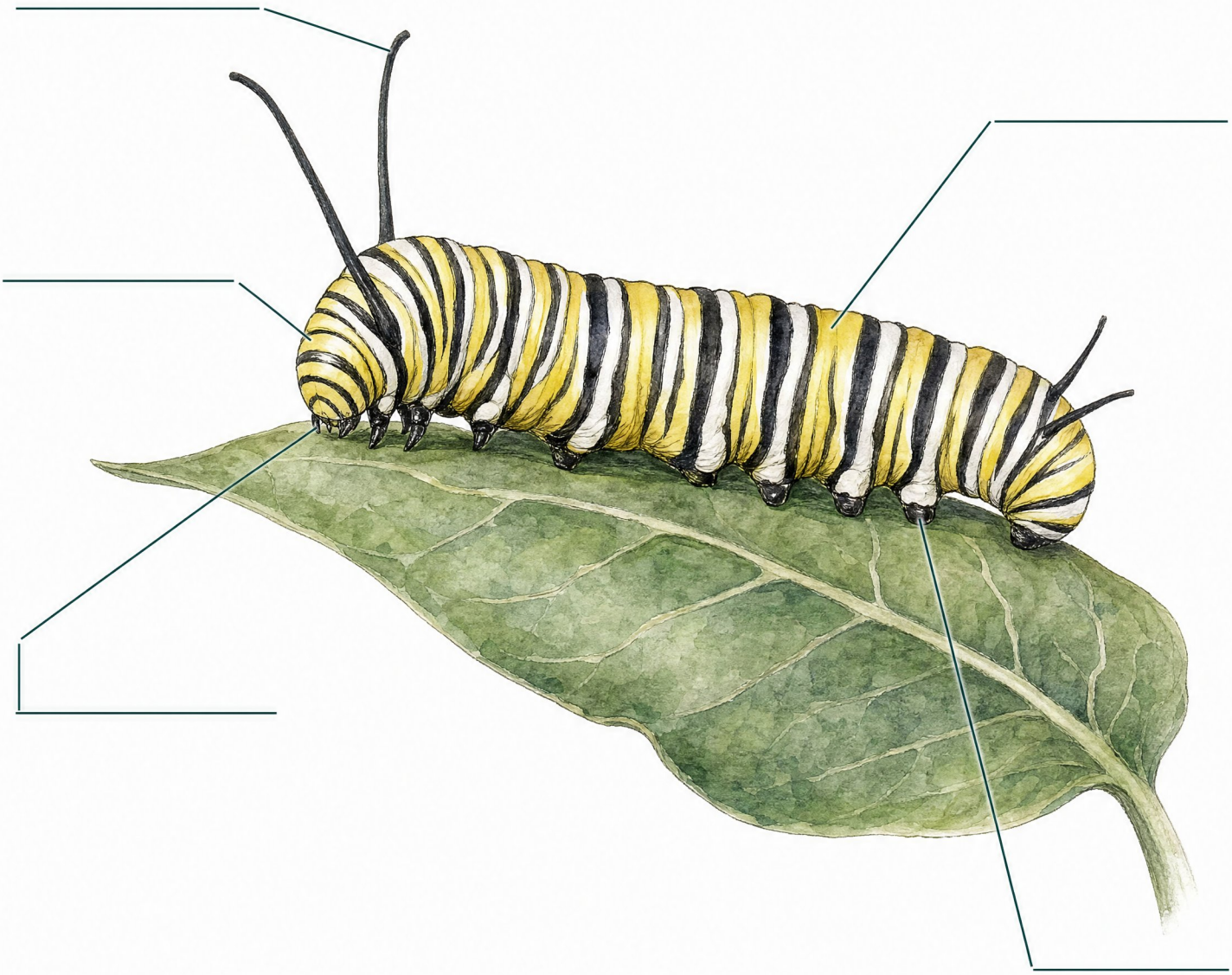
Parts of a Butterfly

Can you name each part without help?



Parts of a Caterpillar

Write each word on the correct line.



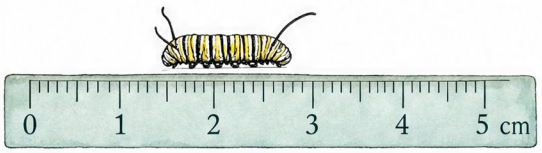
Word Bank

head filament true leg proleg segment

Five Growth Stages

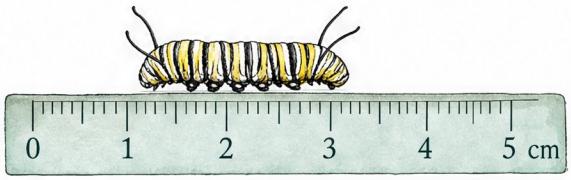
A caterpillar grows in five stages called instars. Measure each one.

1st instar



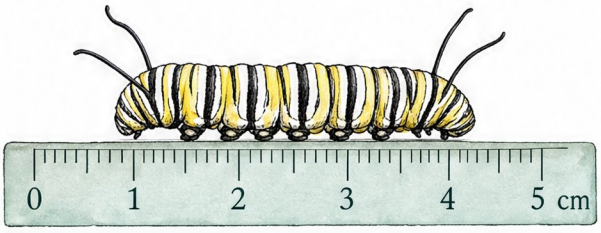
_____

2nd instar



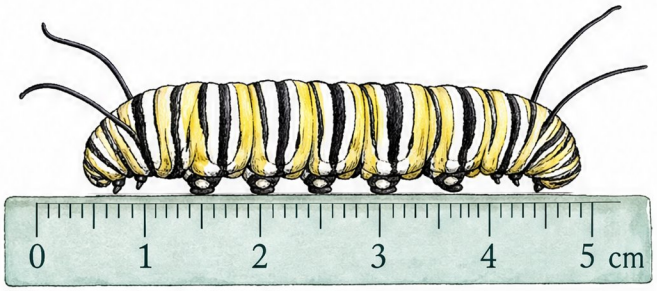
_____

3rd instar



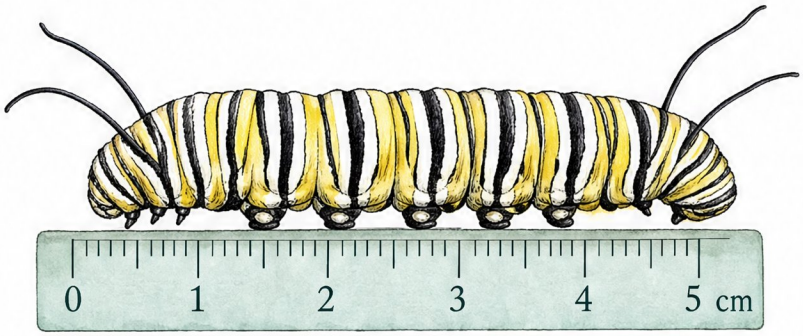
_____

4th instar



_____

5th instar

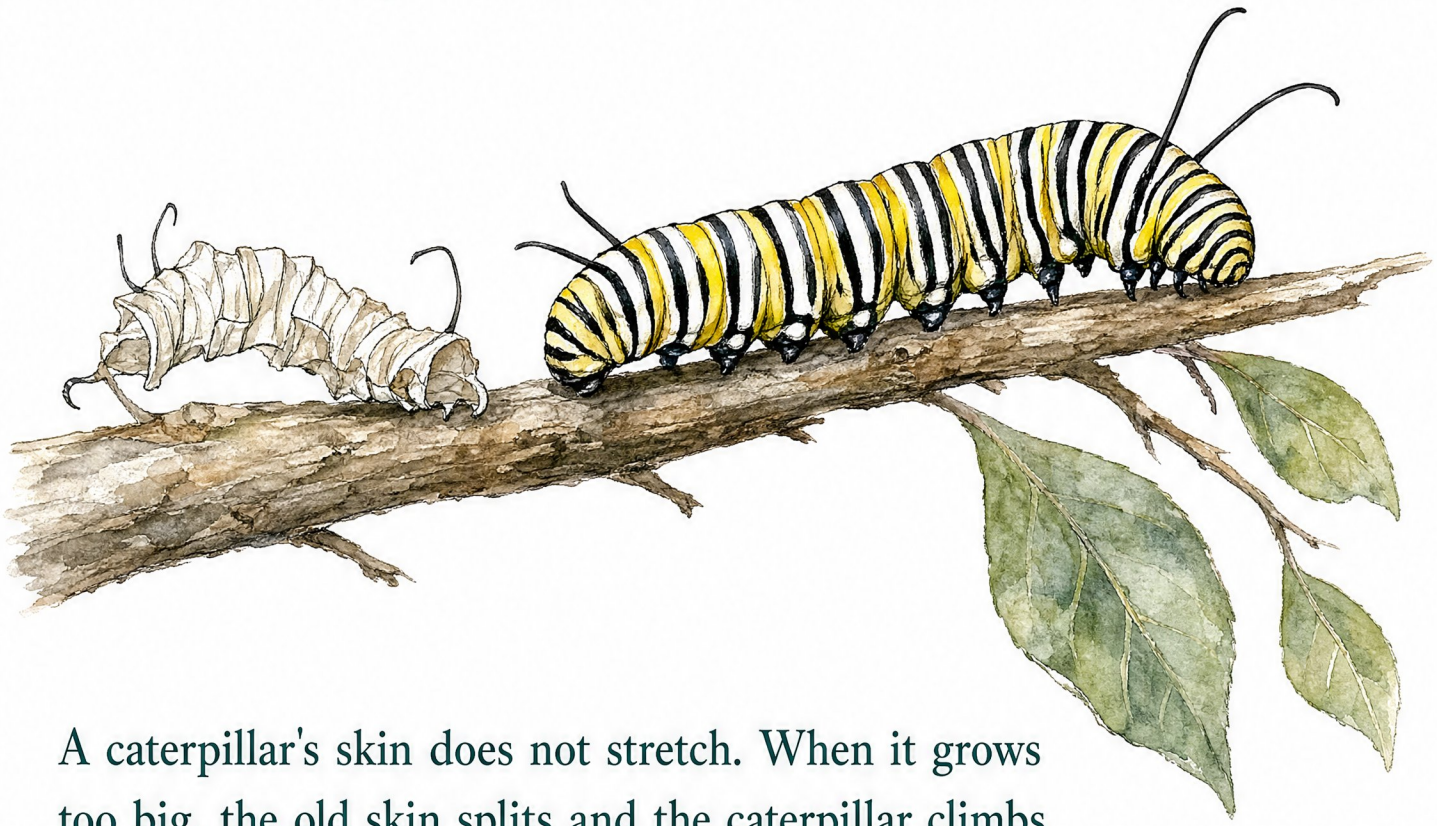


_____

Did You Know

A caterpillar sheds its skin every three to five days because its skin cannot stretch.

Why Shed Your Skin?



A caterpillar's skin does not stretch. When it grows too big, the old skin splits and the caterpillar climbs out wearing a new one underneath. A monarch does this five times before it is ready to become a chrysalis.

Think About It

1. Why must a caterpillar shed its skin?

2. What would happen if it could not?

Milkweed and Only Milkweed



A monarch mother will lay her eggs on nothing but milkweed. Milkweed sap is poisonous to most animals, but monarchs can eat it safely. The poison stays in their bodies and makes them taste terrible to birds. No milkweed means no monarchs.

Questions

1. Why is milkweed important to monarchs?

_____

_____

2. How does eating milkweed keep a monarch safe?

_____

_____

Host Plant or Nectar Plant?

A host plant feeds caterpillars. A nectar plant feeds butterflies. Cut and sort.

Host Plant	Nectar Plant



milkweed



coneflower



zinnia



milkweed leaf



goldenrod



aster

Butterfly or Moth?

Look closely. How can you tell them apart?

Butterfly





Moth





Remember

A butterfly makes a smooth chrysalis. Most moths spin a silk cocoon.

How a Butterfly Drinks



A butterfly cannot bite or chew. Its mouth is a long tube called a proboscis. It uncoils it like a drinking straw to sip nectar, then curls it back under its head.

Try This

Sip water through a straw. That is how every butterfly eats.

Butterfly Vocabulary

Draw a line from each word to what it means.

metamorphosis ○	○ a long journey to a warmer place
chrysalis ○	○ the smooth green case a butterfly forms
instar ○	○ changing completely from one form to another
proboscis ○	○ a coiled tube for drinking
migration ○	○ one growth stage of a caterpillar



Trace the Words

Trace each word, then write it again on the empty line.



egg



caterpillar



chrysalis



butterfly



milkweed

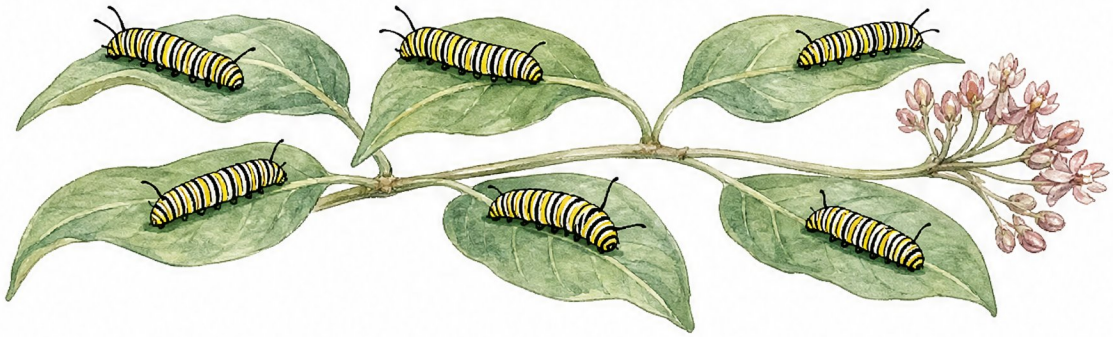
Count the Caterpillars

Count what you see. Write the number in the box.









Now Try This

How many caterpillars are there altogether?

_____

How Many Days?

Read each card. Then add up the days.



Egg - about 4 days



Caterpillar - 9 to 14 days



Chrysalis - 7 to 14 days



Butterfly - 3 to 6 weeks

Add Them Up

About how many days does it take to go from egg to butterfly?

_____

_____

The Long Journey



Monarchs born at the end of summer do not live for a few weeks like their parents. They live for months, and they fly up to three thousand miles to spend the winter in Mexico. Nobody has taught them the way. They have never been there before.

Think About It

How do you think they know where to go?

_____

_____

Symmetry Wings

A butterfly's wings match. Finish the other side.



Look Closely

Both wings on a butterfly carry the same pattern, like a mirror.

Field Notes



Date _____ Time _____ Weather _____ Where _____

What I saw - draw it here

What it was doing

_____

_____

_____

_____

Something I noticed

_____

_____

_____

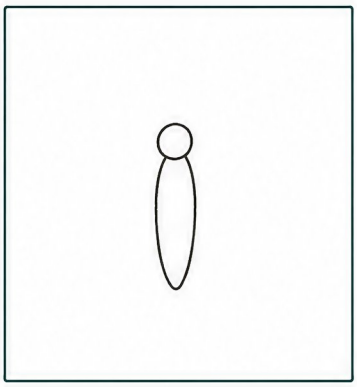
_____



Draw a Butterfly

Follow the four steps. Then draw your own in the big box.

1



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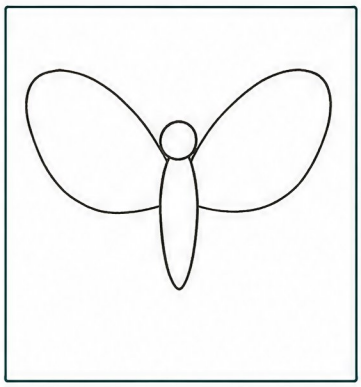

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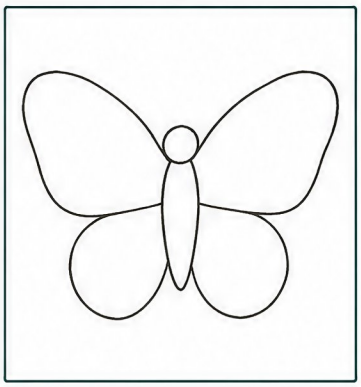

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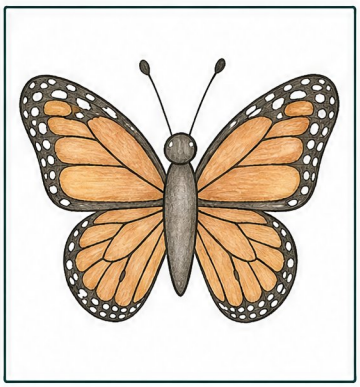


Your turn

What I Learned

You know all of this now. Fill it in without looking back.

1. What are the four stages of a butterfly's life?

_____

2. What is the only plant a monarch caterpillar will eat?

_____

3. What is a chrysalis?

_____

4. How can you tell a butterfly from a moth?

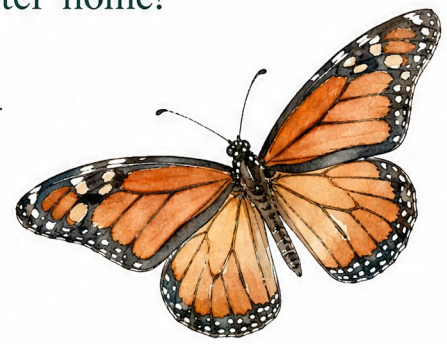
_____

5. What is a proboscis for?

_____

6. How far can a monarch fly to reach its winter home?

_____



Answer Key

For the grown-up

p3, p4 - egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly

p6 - On a milkweed leaf. About four days.

p7 - Milkweed. It sheds its skin five times.

p8 - Green. One to two weeks.

p9 - Small and crumpled. Three to six weeks.

p10, p11 - head, thorax, abdomen, antenna, wing, proboscis

p12 - head, filament, true leg, proleg, segment

p15 - Monarchs lay eggs only on milkweed. Its poison stays in the monarch and makes it taste bad to birds.

p16 - Host: milkweed, milkweed leaf. Nectar: coneflower, zinnia, goldenrod, aster.

p17 - Club-tipped antennae and a smooth chrysalis. A moth has feathery antennae and a silk cocoon.

p21 - 3, 5, 2, 6. Sixteen altogether.

p22 - About thirty days from egg to butterfly.

p27 - Answers will vary.



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