

Monarch Butterfly

The monarch is an incredible butterfly. Each year, this brightly-coloured insect spends the spring and summer months munching on milkweed leaves and drinking nectar from flowers in North America. When autumn comes and the weather turns cold, it travels thousands of miles south to Mexico. It then spends the entire winter hibernating; only to wake up in the spring to travel all the way back again!

Migration

The monarch migrates further than any other butterfly. What's even more amazing is that it takes four generations of monarchs for this to happen – the creatures only live for a few months. That means it will take a monarch butterfly's great grandchild to complete the entire journey over the year! How they know how to do this has baffled scientists for years!



Milkweed

Milkweed is the only plant monarchs eat when they are caterpillars and they don't grow in the forests of Mexico. That's why it's important for the butterfly to fly back north to USA and Canada where there's lots of it. The monarch will then lay its eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves. Once the caterpillar hatches, it gorges on the tasty green leaves for about two weeks. It then connects itself to a twig or a leaf and forms a chrysalis. That's when its amazing transformation into a butterfly begins.



1. Where do monarch butterflies spend the winter?



2. Why is it important for the monarch to fly back north to USA and Canada when it's spring?



3. 'Once the caterpillar hatches, it gorges on the tasty green leaves...'. What does it mean by 'gorges'?



4. What makes the monarch butterfly so 'incredible' and 'amazing'? Think of at least three reasons.

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