



THE OSPREY

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Who Doesn't Like Butterflies?

Ruth Heil

On a past writing assignment, I learned about monarch butterflies. I was fascinated.

So often we see the monarch's golden wings fluttering around in the summer heat. Their story is a metaphor for the possibilities that come from metamorphosis -- a change -- and it's hard to see a butterfly without smiling. Did you ever wonder where they go or how they survive? If so, here are a few monarch facts that I either never knew or had forgotten:

- Monarchs depend on milkweed to survive, not because the adults eat the nectar, but because the female lays her eggs on the leaves which are then eaten by the emerging caterpillar.
- The caterpillar lives only 10 days as a voracious eater, devouring two full milkweed leaves each day.
- A butterfly roosts at night when the temperatures drop. It folds up its wings and blends into its surroundings. It will fly again as soon as the temperature warms.
- Birds do not eat butterflies because the milkweed in the butterfly's system is poisonous.
- You can touch a butterfly's wings without harming them.
- A caterpillar transforms into a pupa, and after fourteen days or less, emerges as a full-sized, adult monarch.
- There are four generations of butterflies born every year. Ones born early in the season live

about two to five weeks; those born in September are considered the migrating generation. They may live up to nine months in which time all the monarchs from the Eastern seaboard travel to central Mexico for the winter. When they return, they lay their eggs. This generation is responsible for the species' survival.

- As pollinators, monarchs are important to our food supply.
- Severe storms occasionally reduce the population, but more frequent storms, habitat destruction in Mexico, and fewer weeds left to grow in our backyards are cause for concern.



Want to learn more about these beautiful and beneficial insects? Check out: https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/Monarch_Butterfly/

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Brown Pelican by Dr. George C. West

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Please complete the information requested in full (even if this is a renewal). All information is confidential and for club use only! Many of our notices and informative mailings are done via email.

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