## MONARCH BUTTERFLY (Danaus plexippus)



With its large orange wings marked with black lines and white dots, the monarch butterfly is easily one of the most recognizable butterflies in North America. There are two main populations in North America separated by the Rocky Mountains, called the eastern and western populations. In Pennsylvania, monarchs are found throughout the summer months flying in open fields and meadows. As summer begins to transition into fall, the eastern population migrates to central

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Mexico's high mountains where they spend the winter. Around March, the overwintering monarchs begin their journey northward. As they travel, the monarchs mate and lay eggs. After mating and egg-laying, the adult butterflies die, and their offspring continue the remainder of the northern migration.

Monarch caterpillars feed on milkweed, storing a toxin created by the plant in their bodies. When the caterpillars develop into adults, they retain the toxins, causing them to taste poorly to predators. Adult monarchs feed on nectar from a range of blooming plants, including milkweed.

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