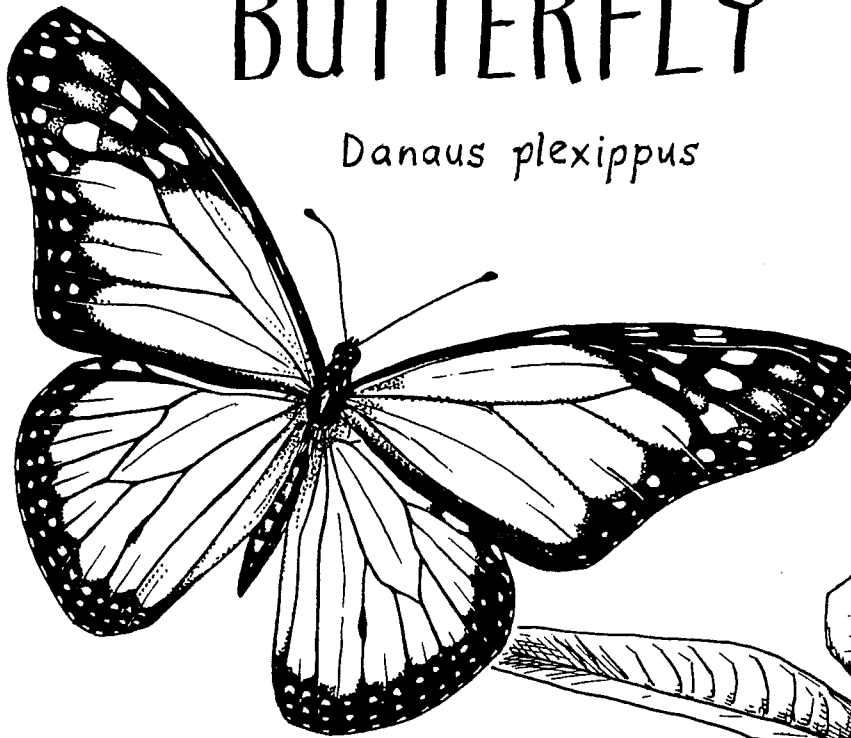


River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Danaus plexippus



In fall the Monarch migrates from eastern North America to its wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America. In spring they migrate back north, where they lay their eggs singly on the bottom side of the leaves of the milkweed. The eggs hatch in about four days, and the emerged larvae feed on the leaves of the milkweed, molting four times over the next ten days: they are then ready to pupate. The pupae (chrysalises) are attached under the leaf or onto some other solid object. Pupation lasts twelve days, at which time the adult butterfly emerges.



Three or four broods are possible, with the adults of the last brood migrating south in the fall, to winter there as adults.

Feeding on the milkweed during the larval (caterpillar) stage renders the Monarch distasteful to many predators, and they are thus avoided.

Monarchs can be found in fields or roadsides where flowers are plentiful, especially milkweeds. Monarchs are large butterflies with a wingspan of 3 1/2" to 4", orange in color, with black stripes. They are strong fliers. Female Monarchs lack the spot of dark scales in the center of the hindwings that marks the male scent glands. Females differ also in having broader black vein lines.