

River Bend Naturalists Notebook

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VICEROY BUTTERFLY

Limenitis archippus



Though a little smaller (2½-3") the Viceroy looks almost exactly like the Monarch. Because of this mimicry - though palatable itself - bird predators mistake it for the unpalatable Monarch and avoid it. The best way to distinguish the Viceroy from the Monarch is by the black band crossing its hindwing pattern at right angles, a marking the Monarch lacks.

The Viceroy overwinters as a partially mature larva (caterpillar) rolled up in a leaf. In the spring when the larva emerges from the leaf, it feeds on the new leaves of such plants as the willows and poplars. In a few weeks it matures and then pupates (forming a chrysalis) attached to a leaf or a branch. Pupation lasts seven to ten days. The adult butterfly then emerges, feeds, mates, and fertilized females then begin to lay eggs on the tips of leaves. These larvae mature in three to four weeks; only the partially mature larvae of the last (2nd or 3rd) brood overwinters.

To find the Viceroy caterpillar in winter, look on the twigs of willows, poplars or aspen saplings for a small remaining leaf curled over into a tube, and secured to the twig with silk. They are uncommon and hard to find.