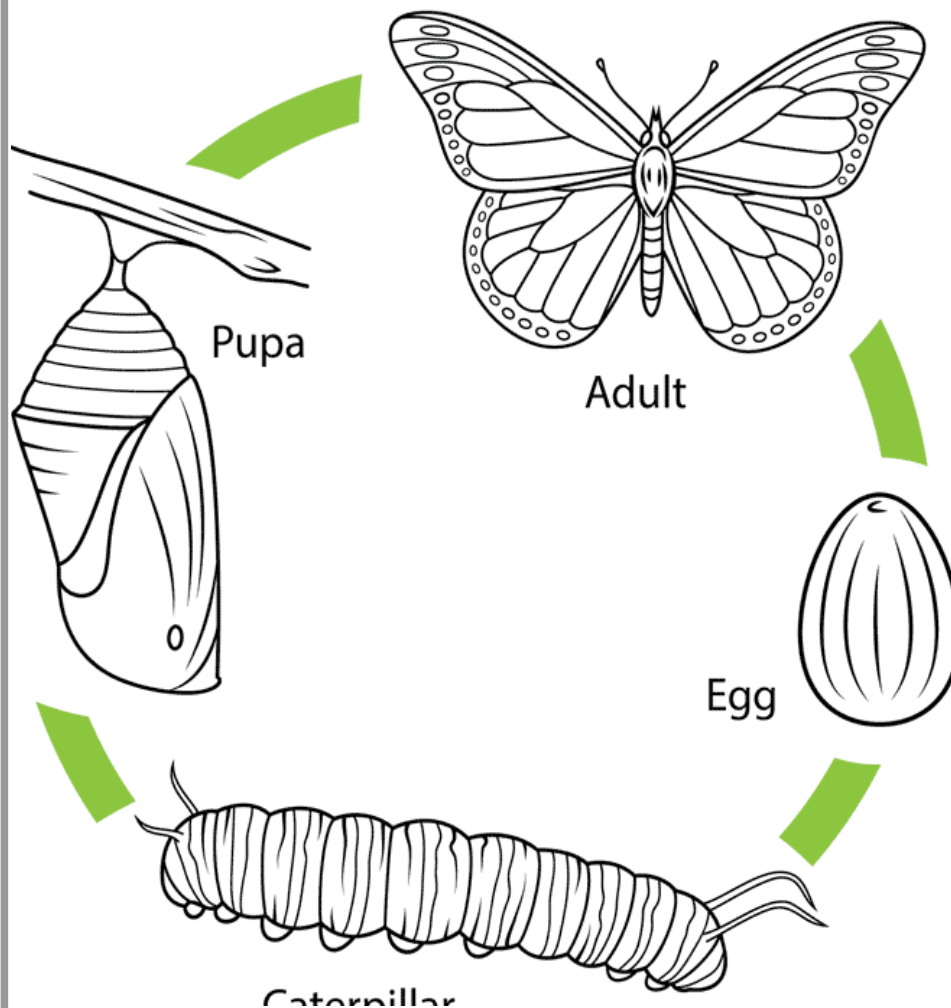


Life Cycle of a Monarch Butterfly




All pictures in this booklet were taken at Ulistac Natural Area and show the different life stages of the Monarch Butterfly.

Although we have seen the eggs, we have not been able to capture them on camera as they are so small (about the size of a pinhead), they require very specialized camera equipment.

Monarch caterpillars (larvae) will only eat Milkweed. Milkweed is toxic to all vertebrates, so by eating the Milkweed, the caterpillar (an invertebrate) will become unpalatable for many predators, for example, birds.

When the caterpillar first hatches, it is only 2mm-6mm long:
about this size —

It will then eat, and eat, and eat for 9 -14 days until it is about 25mm–45mm long:
about this size 





When the caterpillar has fully grown, it will form a J shape on the underside of a leaf.

At Ulistac, we have found that they tend to move away from the Milkweed before they do this.

The caterpillar will usually remain in this position for around 18 hours before starting the transformation into a chrysalis.



Monarch chrysalis (pupa) are bright green, with a gold necklace near the top. The chrysalis are usually less than an inch long.

This stage normally lasts around 8-10 days, but it can last up to a month if the weather is cold.

As the butterfly gets close to emerging (eclosing), you can see the black and orange coloring start to appear.



When a Monarch Butterfly ecloses (emerges), it's wings are all folded up and you can see it's abdomen. Gradually, it's wings will straighten out to their full size.

At this stage the wings are too soft to fly (like silk), after an hour or more the wings will be fully dry (like paper) and the butterfly will be able to fly.

One of our volunteers was lucky enough to find a Monarch that had just eclosed. The following photos show the various stages from chrysalis to fully formed butterfly.

November 10th 2016



December 5th 2016





