

# Monarch Butterfly Migration

Contributed by Shirley

Hi, pals !!

Kadin here.

The monarch butterflies are migrating to their winter 'home'. Our "western" population spends the winter in various sites in central California, notably in Monterey, Pacific Grove and Santa Cruz. They cluster together on pine tree limbs during the winter months by the thousands, looking like leaves, with their wings closed. They hibernate for several months. The females are the first to leave after hibernation, in February or March, flying inland looking for early sprouts of milkweed plants where they'll deposit their eggs. The monarch is the only butterfly that migrates both north and south as birds do, but no single individual makes the entire round trip. My mom grew up in Monterey and used to get to see them each November. The town also has a fun parade to celebrate.

During the rest of the year Monarchs can be found in a wide range of habitats such as fields, meadows, prairie remnants, urban and suburban parks, gardens, and roadsides.

Monarch butterflies are poisonous or distasteful to birds because of milkweed poison stored during the caterpillar stage; their bright colors are warning colors. The Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) is a "milkweed butterfly" (subfamily Danainae), in the family Nymphalidae. It is perhaps the best known of all North American butterflies. Their wingspan is almost 4 inches wide. (There is also a local 'impostor', the Viceroy butterfly which looks very similar but is smaller.)

You can read more at [Wikipedia](#) and [Monarchwatch.org](#).

Happy Trails till next time.

Kadin