

# Suzy's World

## Caterpillar - How does a caterpillar change into a butterfly?

### Fact

- A Monarch caterpillar has all the ingredients to develop into a butterfly inside the chrysalis. And it uses all the food it ate for energy.
- All the cells that made up its caterpillar body mix up and re clump to make different things like wings and legs and antennae.
- The Monarch caterpillar sheds its skin about four times while it's growing. The final time it sheds its skin it exposes the green chrysalis.
- The Monarch spends up to 12 days in its egg when it's first laid, about three weeks as a caterpillar (or larvae) and about two weeks as a chrysalis (or pupa).
- The Monarch butterfly can live for about 60 days.

### Do you know

- Monarch butterflies don't do poos but caterpillars certainly do. If butterflies do need to go to the loo they just squirt a little bit of water out of their abdomen (their tummy).
- Monarch butterflies only lay their eggs on the plant that the caterpillars eat – the swan plant and they'll fly huge distances to find a swan plant. This food is important for giving the caterpillar lots of energy and helps it change into a butterfly.
- When the caterpillar hatches it begins three weeks of almost non-stop eating by eating its own eggshell.
- A Monarch caterpillar increases its size by 2,700 times in the three weeks it remains in the caterpillar stage!
- Caterpillars will eat pumpkin – if they haven't eaten enough swan plant they won't be able to turn into a butterfly.

### Experiments you can do

Is there a swan plant in your garden? If there is watch it closely in the warm summer months and you may get to see this amazing feat of nature yourself. Maybe make a diary recording the number of eggs and how long each took to hatch. Once the caterpillars are on the move it will be hard to sort out which one is which but you could see if they're all growing at the same rate and turn into chrysalises at about the same time. Then see how long it takes for the chrysalis to turn into a butterfly.

### Other Investigations

What other creatures do you have in the garden that you could make a similar diary about? A nest of spider's eggs can be interesting to watch. Or how about slaters or praying mantis'. Where do they like to live? What kinds of food do they like to eat? Do they lay eggs? Do they make chrysalises?  
Let me know the results of your investigations.

### Jokes

Why did the girl throw butter out the window? Because she wanted to see a butter-fly!  
From Joshua White