



Lifecycle of a Monarch Butterfly

By Zoe and Alexa Staszynski



Introduction

Please watch our video



Stage 1 - Eggs

Female monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed plants. Eggs are cylinder shaped, and white or yellow in colour. Eggs take 1-5 days to hatch.



Stage 2 - Larva/Caterpillar

After hatching, monarch caterpillars are the size of rice. Monarch caterpillars will eat their egg shell before moving on to the leaf. Monarch caterpillars will molt five times before pupation. Each length of time between a molt is called an instar. Caterpillars will eat for 10-14 days before it forms a chrysalis.



Our friend Morag had milkweed plants in her garden. She found monarch caterpillars on the plant and gave us two. We called them Milk and Gerald. We put them inside our vegetable growing pod that was in our backyard.



Here is a video of Milk and Gerald eating on the first day we got them.



Today we realised that monarch caterpillars can eat butternut pumpkin. Here is a video of Gerald eating the pumpkin because most of the milkweed leaves have been eaten. Milk escaped to look for somewhere to make a chrysalis.



Gerald is now trying to find a safe place to pupate by going on an adventure.



Gerald is getting ready to pupate. Gerald is doing a “J” shape so he or she can spin silk and make a chrysalis around his or herself. Gerald will stay in this “J” shape round about 24 hours before spinning silk.



Stage 3 - Pupa/Chrysalis

In a Monarchs pupal stage, they transform from larva to adult butterfly inside of their chrysalis. They take 9-14 days to do this.

This is one of Morag's caterpillars. We did not see this stage, so we have this video to show you instead. The music in this video is called *Magic Dance* - which is what the caterpillar is doing.



This is Gerald after he or she transformed into a Chrysalis. It was an exciting day. Gerald has pupated on a strawberry plant.

Day 8
The chrysalis is still green. We need to be patient.





Day 9

Gerald is still in his or her chrysalis. Gerald sure is taking its time in there! Gerald must be comfortable!

Day 11

Today we started to see Gerald's wings! How exciting!





Day 12

We are bored of waiting for Gerald to come out of his or her chrysalis.

Day 13
Nothing exciting has happened on this day.





Day 14

On this day we have taken a picture of the back of the chrysalis.

Day 15
Waiting...



Day 16
Still waiting...



Day 17
Still waiting...





Day 18

This is a big picture of the strawberry plant the chrysalis is hanging off of.

Day 19
We found Gerald's
poo!



← This is Gerald's
poo!

Day 20
This is a close up of Gerald's chrysalis.



Day 21
Waiting...



Day 22
The chrysalis is a little wet... it was raining on this day.



Day 23
Still waiting...



Day 24
Bored



Day 25
Still waiting...



Day 26
Gerald's chrysalis has started to
turn black!





Morning



Night

Day 27

Exciting day because Gerald's chrysalis turned all black! We will have a butterfly soon!



Day 28

Today Gerald emerged out of the chrysalis! He is a boy! Now it is time to release him into the wild!



This caterpillar is also Morag's. This time the caterpillar is coming out of the chrysalis as a butterfly. The music used in this video is called On Our Way - because he is!



Stage 4 - Adult Butterfly

After about five days of a female monarch butterfly being out of her chrysalis she is old enough to lay eggs. If you want to tell if a monarch butterfly is a male or a female, you will have to look at their hind wings. Male monarchs have a black dot on the surface of their hind wings, while females do not.



This is a video of us putting Gerald in a jar so we can release him into a Butterfly Friendly Garden. The music is called Come With Me.



A video of us releasing Gerald. The music is called Taking Flight

Gerald
is free!





Here's
Gerald!