

NATURE DETECTIVES

SPRING 1995

BUTTERFLY DAYS

Spring is here and it's fun to be outside. You can splash in puddles, watch a Robin build a nest, run, skip, jump and climb, then lie down in the cool grass to watch butterflies. Where would the butterflies be? In a butterfly garden, of course!

What is a butterfly garden? If you could ask a butterfly, the answer might be, "A butterfly garden is a sunny place with nectar-filled flowers. It has a shallow puddle where I can drink. And if there is an apple tree, please leave some delicious, mushy, rotten fruit on the ground for me. I need an area where I'm sheltered from the wind. And I guess I should tell you, butterflies like purple flowers best and yellow ones second best."

Even if you don't have a big yard, you can make a butterfly garden with a few flower pots and your imagination. Try to include something from each list below:

Flowers Ideas:

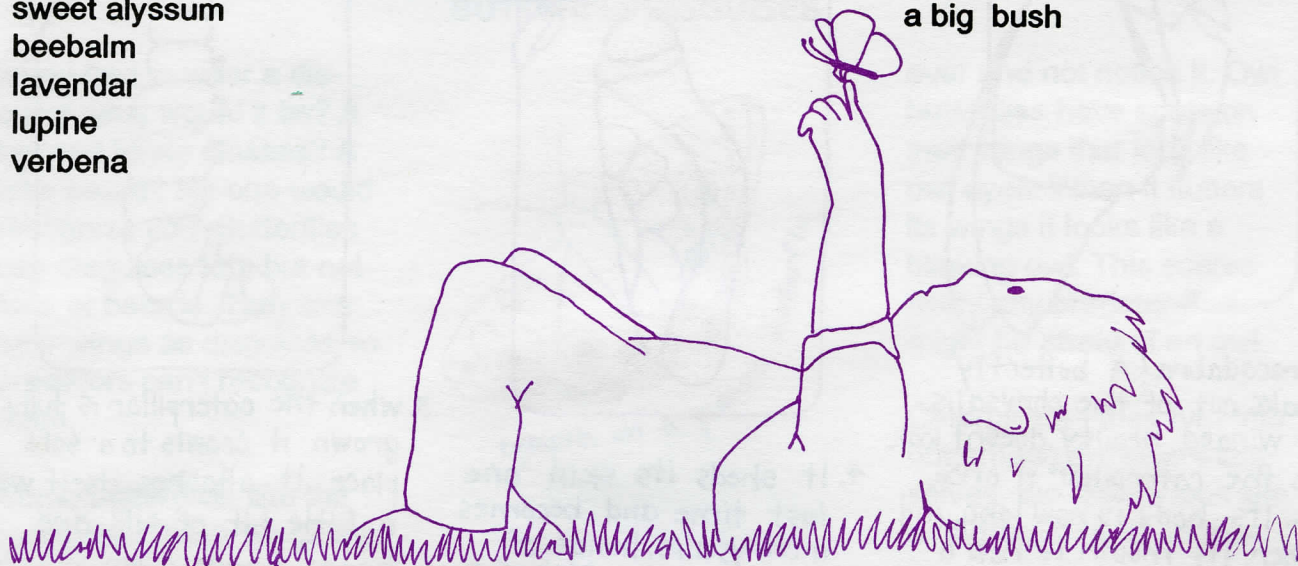
zinnias
cosmos
marigolds
sweet alyssum
beebalm
lavendar
lupine
verbena

Water Ideas:

a pie pan filled with water
a low spot in your garden
where rain water collects

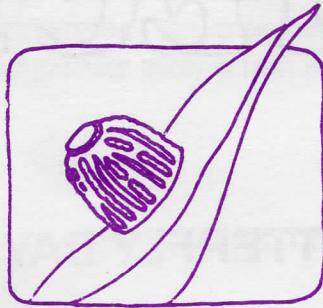
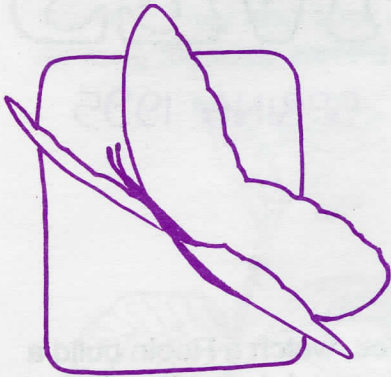
Shelter Ideas:

The side of your house
a fence
an apartment balcony wall
a big bush

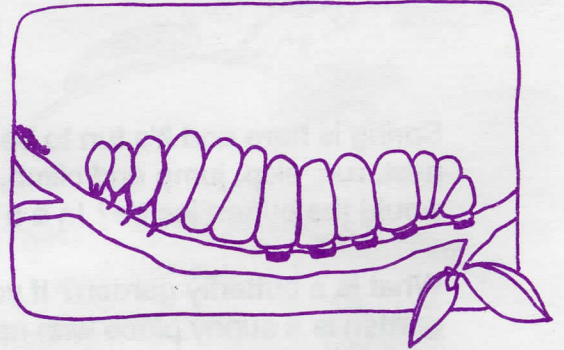


PRESTO!

A butterfly's life is like a magic act. It has four stages and each is completely different from the others. This amazing insect changes from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly - magically!

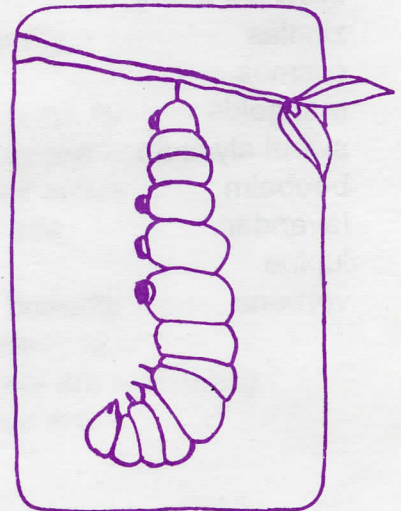
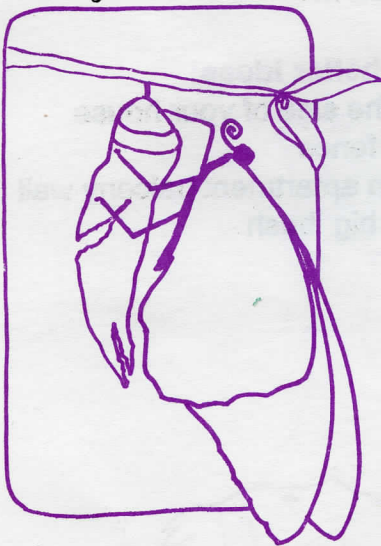


1. On the underside of a leaf a tiny beautiful egg hides.



6. The butterfly pumps fluid into its crumpled wings. When they harden the butterfly takes off! One day, if it is female, the butterfly will find a special plant (the kind that was its favorite food when it was a caterpillar) and lay a tiny egg under one of the leaves. The magic starts again!

2. A caterpillar hatches by eating its way out of the egg. It wriggles out onto the plant and keeps eating and eating. The hungry creeper grows so big that it outgrows and sheds its skin a few times.



5. Abracadabra! A butterfly breaks out of the chrysalis. The winged beauty doesn't look like the caterpillar it once was. Its body is now long and slender. Its mouth is now a long curled straw. It has wings!

4. It sheds its skin one last time and becomes a chrysalis. Inside of this hard shell big changes take place.

3. When the caterpillar is fully grown it crawls to a safe place. It attaches itself with a little bit of silk and hangs upside down.

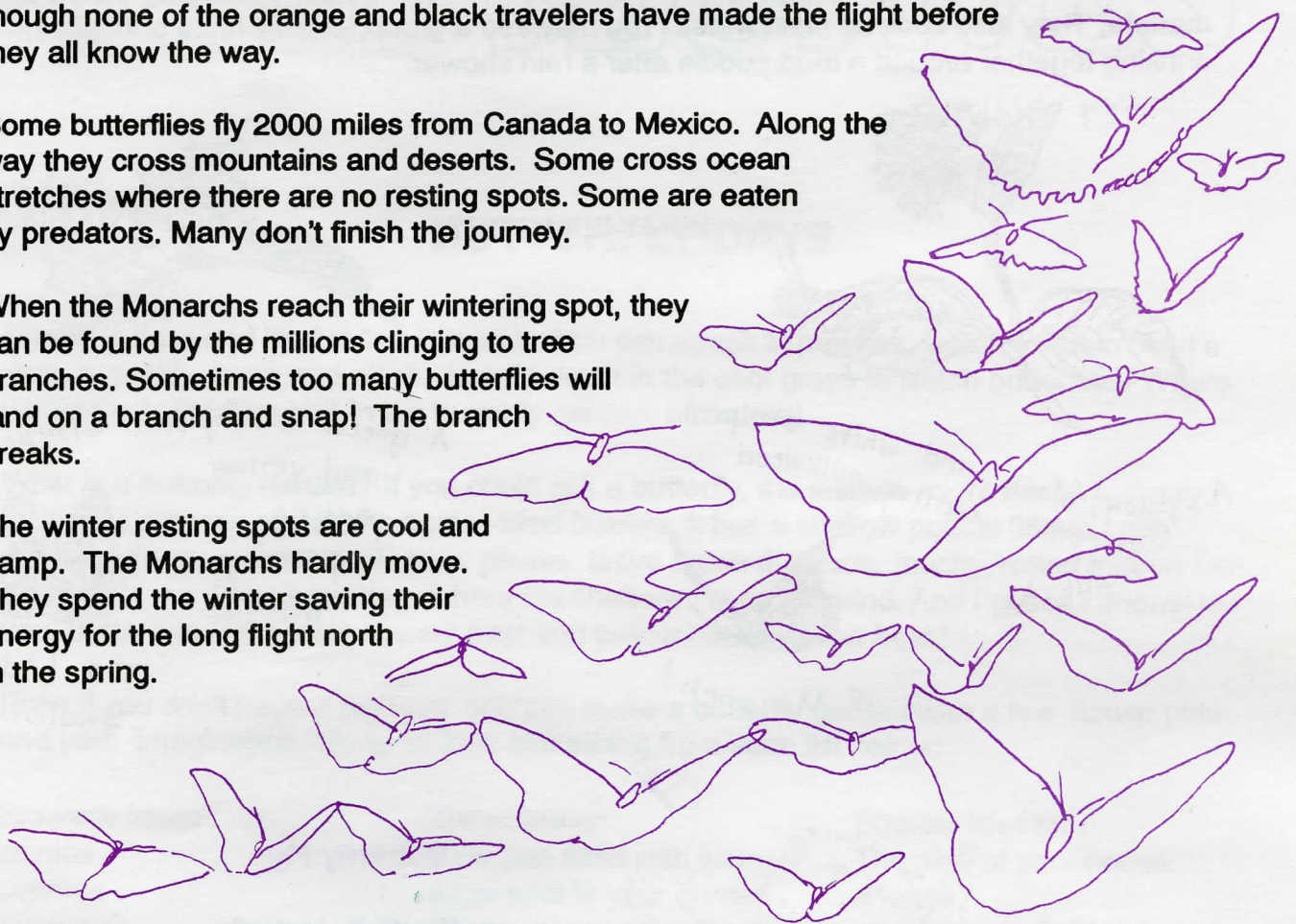
WHERE DID THEY GO?

Remember the longest car ride you have ever been on? Imagine you are a small, delicate butterfly and you need to make that trip by "winging it". Every fall, when the weather cools, Monarch butterflies start on a long journey south. Even though none of the orange and black travelers have made the flight before they all know the way.

Some butterflies fly 2000 miles from Canada to Mexico. Along the way they cross mountains and deserts. Some cross ocean stretches where there are no resting spots. Some are eaten by predators. Many don't finish the journey.

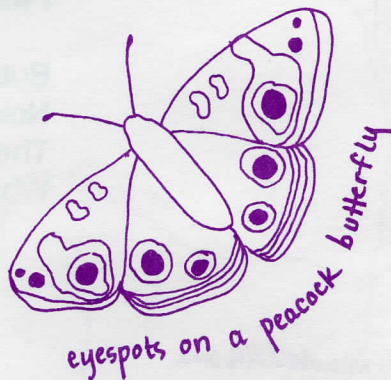
When the Monarchs reach their wintering spot, they can be found by the millions clinging to tree branches. Sometimes too many butterflies will land on a branch and snap! The branch breaks.

The winter resting spots are cool and damp. The Monarchs hardly move. They spend the winter saving their energy for the long flight north in the spring.



BUTTERFLY DISGUISES

If you had to wear a disguise what would it be? A hat and funny glasses? A fake beard? No one would recognize you. Butterflies use disguises too, but not hats or beards. They use their wings as disguises so predators can't recognize them.



Some butterflies, like the Indian leaf, have wings that look like dead leaves so a bird will fly right

over and not notice it. Owl butterflies have spots on their wings that look like owl eyes. When it flutters its wings it looks like a blinking owl. This scares away any predator that might be afraid of an owl.

Caterpillars (they turn into butterflies) disguise themselves, too. Some look like bird droppings or snakes.

SLURP!

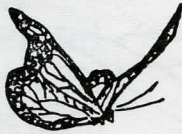
Would you ever jump on a piece of cake to see how it tasted? A butterfly perches on a blossom and the pads on its feet act as taste buds—they sense whether the flower has sweet nectar inside. The butterfly uncoils a tube on its head. The proboscis extends into the blossom's nectar cup. Slurp! Some butterflies sip moisture from decaying carion and manure. They also suck up plain water. You may see a group, usually male butterflies, drinking together around a mud puddle after a rain shower.



WHAT WILL I BE?



A yellow, black and white striped caterpillar eating milkweed will be... a Monarch!



A green caterpillar striped black and yellow eating parsley will be... a black Swallowtail!



Butterfly Fly

Butterfly butterfly
Fly right by me
It's all your colors
I want to see

Butterfly butterfly
Now fly away far
The flowers are wondering
Where you are

Lets celebrate spring and butterflies! Join the Nature Detectives for a butterfly walk. Make your own butterfly wings and play a metamorphosis game. See the Discover calendar for details.