

A long journey for a small butterfly

Reading · Lectura en inglés británico (texto informativo): Un largo viaje para una mariposa pequeña

The monarch is an orange and black butterfly. An adult weighs about half a gram, so it is lighter than a paper clip. But every autumn, millions of monarchs fly from Canada and the northern United States to central Mexico. Some travel up to 4,800 kilometres, and the journey can take more than two months.

They spend the winter in forests of oyamel fir trees, high in the mountains of Michoacán and the State of Mexico, between 2,400 and 3,600 metres above sea level. They arrive at the beginning of November, at the same time as the Day of the Dead. The butterflies hang from the trees in big groups, very close together, to stay warm. Sometimes the branches bend under their weight!

These butterflies are special. Most adult monarchs live only two to five weeks, but the ones that fly to Mexico can live six to nine months.

In March, they wake up and start flying north. On the way, the females lay eggs on milkweed plants, because milkweed is the only food that monarch caterpillars can eat. The old butterflies die, but their children and grandchildren continue the journey. The monarchs that fly south in autumn are the great-grandchildren, or even the great-great-grandchildren, of the ones that flew north in spring.

Scientists have put tags on monarchs to study their journey. The longest flight in a single day by a tagged monarch was more than 420 kilometres. Many of the forests where monarchs spend the winter are part of the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008. Next autumn, a new generation will make the same amazing journey.



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Word bank · Vocabulario

journey: viaje

weighs (weigh): pesa (pesar)

paper clip: clip

autumn: otoño

oyamel fir trees: abetos oyamel

above sea level: sobre el nivel del mar

to stay warm: para no pasar frío

lay eggs: poner huevos

milkweed: asclepia (algodoncillo)

caterpillars: orugas

great-grandchildren: bisnietos

tags: etiquetas de marcaje

1 Read and write T (true) or F (false).

Lee y escribe T (verdadero) o F (falso).

1. A monarch is heavier than a paper clip.
2. Monarch caterpillars can only eat milkweed.
3. The butterflies arrive in Mexico in March.
4. The winter forests are more than 2,000 metres above sea level.

☐ T	☐ F
☐ T	☐ F
☐ T	☐ F
☐ T	☐ F

2 Read and circle the correct answer.

Lee y rodea la respuesta correcta.

1. The third paragraph is mainly about ...
 - a) where monarchs spend the winter
 - b) how long monarchs live
 - c) what caterpillars eat
2. Why do the butterflies hang in big groups?
 - a) to find food
 - b) to lay eggs
 - c) to stay warm
3. The monarchs that fly south in autumn are ...
 - a) the great-grandchildren or great-great-grandchildren of the ones that flew north
 - b) the same butterflies that flew north in spring
 - c) the parents of the ones that flew north

3 Answer the questions.

Responde a las preguntas.

1. In which two Mexican states are the winter forests?

2. How long can the butterflies that fly to Mexico live?

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4 Imagine and write.

Imagina y escribe.

[illegible]

Open answer · Respuesta libre

A long journey for a small butterfly · Answer key

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Responde a las preguntas.

1. In which two Mexican states are the winter forests?

In Michoacán and the State of Mexico.

2. How long can the butterflies that fly to Mexico live?

Six to nine months.

3. What was the longest flight in a single day by a tagged monarch?

More than 420 kilometres.

4. Since when has the reserve been a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

Since 2008.

 4 Imagine and write.

Imagina y escribe.

1. Imagine you are a monarch butterfly. Write three sentences about your journey to Mexico. Use "will".

[Open answer](#) · [Respuesta libre](#)

Respuesta libre. Ejemplo: I will leave Canada in autumn. I will fly for more than two months. I will spend the winter in an oyamel forest with millions of other butterflies.
