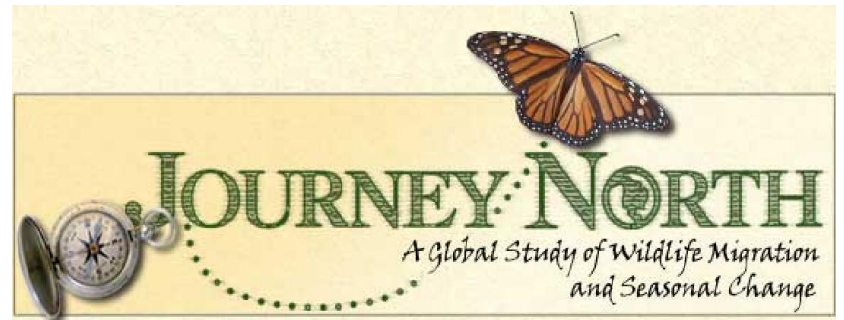




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## **Nectar and Migration Finding Food Along the Way**

by Elizabeth Howard



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Fueling Up

It's autumn, and this adult monarch is on its way to Mexico. During the migratory journey, it stops in a garden to eat. Notice how the monarch positions its wings in order to land upon the flower.



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Sweet Nectar

Monarchs eat a sweet liquid called nectar. They find the nectar in a special part of the flower. Monarchs do not have teeth and they cannot chew, so how do they consume nectar?



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Sipping Straw

Monarchs eat with their proboscis. The proboscis is a long, narrow tube. It works like a drinking straw. Can you see the proboscis in this photo?



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Fall Flowers

The flowers in this garden are asters. These wildflowers bloom across the north in the fall. Asters—and goldenrod—are important nectar sources for migrating monarchs.



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## **Tiny Florets**

Asters have tiny yellow florets. Each floret holds a butterfly-sized sip of nectar. Nectar is about 20% sugar and 80% water. The florets in this flower bloomed on the outside first. Those in the center will open soon.

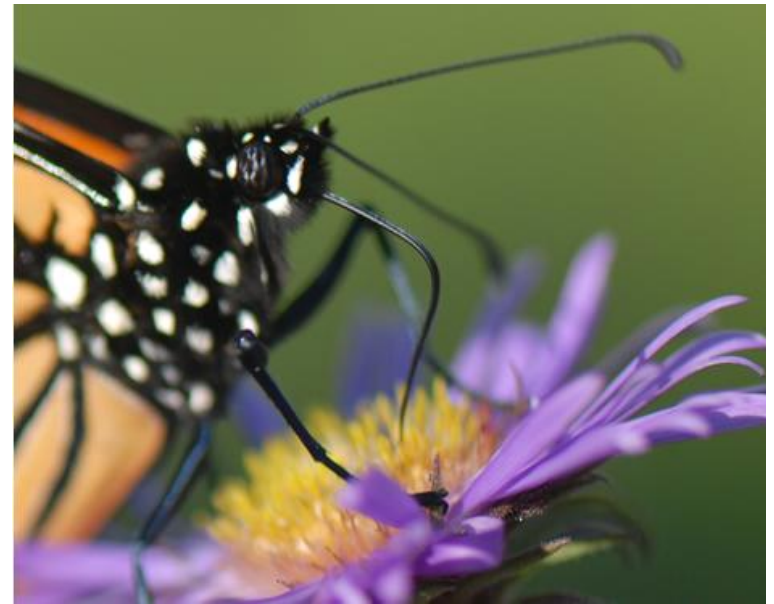


Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## **Dip and Sip**

Monarchs stand on a flower as they eat. They move from one floret to the next—about as quickly as you can say, dip and sip, dip and sip, dip and sip, dip and sip...



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Ready to Fly?

After sipping nectar, the monarch curls up the proboscis and flies off! Can you see the tiny proboscis rolled up like a party straw? The butterfly will coil the proboscis more tightly as it continues to fly. It will pull up its legs the way a plane pulls up its landing gear.



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Focused Feeders

Monarchs must hurry because they must eat enough nectar during their journey south. "Monarchs are so intent on eating during fall migration that you can sneak up and grab them with your fingers," says Dr. Lincoln Brower.



Photo © Elizabeth Howard

## Changing Habitat

Monarchs must hurry during fall migration because their habitat is about to change. Notice that the flowers in the picture have gone to seed. Flowers only provide nectar when they are blooming. Fall frost will kill the flowers across the north. Even in the south, the growing season is slowing down and frost is a danger.

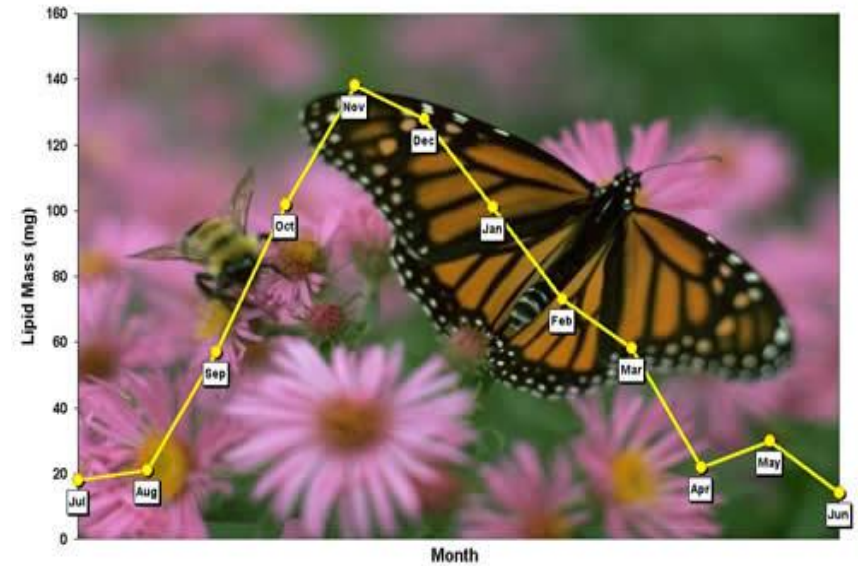


Photo © Dr. Lincoln Brower

## Needing Nectar

This line graph shows how much fat a typical monarch has each month of the year. The nectar monarchs eat in the fall fuels their migration. Extra nectar is stored as fat for winter survival.



Photo © Dr. Lincoln Brower

## Fully Fueled?

Monarchs store fat in the abdomen. Which butterfly looks better prepared to survive the winter months in Mexico?



Photo © Johnson

## Create Habitat Along the Migration Trail

People can help monarchs during fall migration by providing nectar sources. A butterfly garden can be an important place for a monarch to refuel.



Photo © Shiela Daniels

## Report Your Sightings

You can study fall migration wherever monarchs find nectar. Count the number of monarchs you see. Try to make your count at the same time each day and for the same length of time. This process will help you collect fall migration data in a scientific way.



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