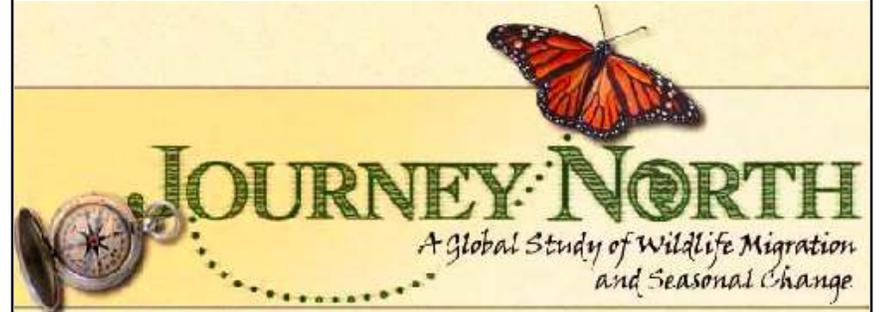




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Layout by Margaret Black



## Do You Know a Monarch When You See One?



by Elizabeth Howard

Every spring and fall we rely on hundreds of observers to track the monarch's migration. These observers expand the eyes and ears of scientists in ways not possible before the Internet. But observations must be accurate in order for the data to be valid and useful. Can you identify a monarch from its look-alikes?

You are about to see some look-alike species that people confuse with monarchs. You will be able to take a careful look — then learn some identification tips from the experts.

Butterflies move quickly! Do you think you will know a monarch when you see one?

## Look, a Butterfly!



1

Is this a monarch?



Is this a monarch?



One is a monarch and the other is a viceroy. Can you find differences?

2

Did you notice the stripe across the Viceroy's hindwings? That stripe is the best field mark to look for. Viceroys are also smaller than monarchs, and they are more skittish when they fly. (If you think it's hard to tell them apart, don't dismay. We will give you more clues later!)

## Monarch

*Danaus plexippus*



## Viceroy

*Limnitis archippus*



Quick! Count the monarchs! How many monarchs do you see in this picture?



Now look at the next picture to see if you were right. The monarchs are circled. The other kind of butterfly is a "queen."



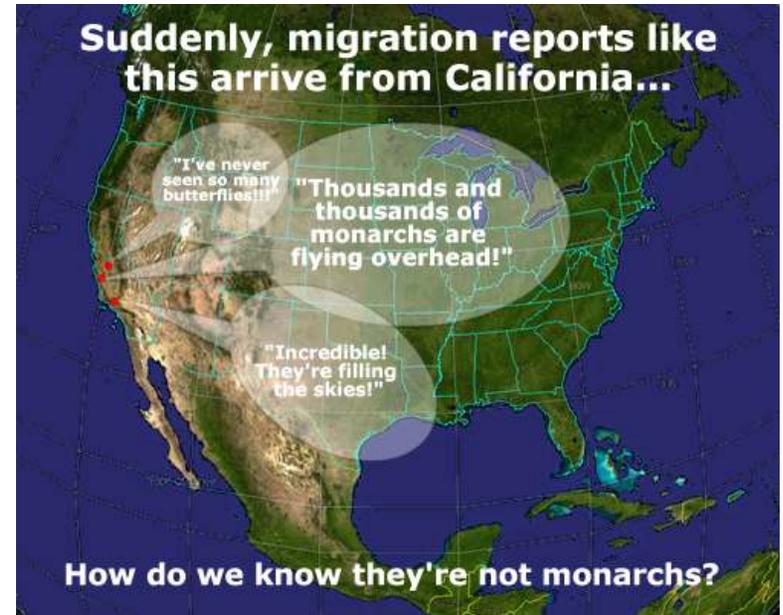
When their wings are closed — or when they are flying — it can be hard to tell monarchs and queens apart. Compare the queen and monarch closely. Describe the differences you see. These species are close relatives. They really do look alike, just as people who are closely related often do.



Here is the queen butterfly with its wings opened. Now it is easy to see that this butterfly is not a monarch.



Sometimes people report monarchs but we know they are mistaken. This map illustrates one example. What are the clues?



Here are the clues that tell us people are **not** seeing monarchs:

**Clues:**

\* It's unusual to see more than 1-2 monarchs at a time in the spring, especially in California.

\* The Painted Lady butterfly does appear suddenly by the millions, especially in the west.

**Painted Lady**  
Vanessa cardui



(Actual size)

When they are side by side it's easy to see that a Painted Lady is much smaller than a Monarch. But these tiny butterflies can trick people when they are flying. They also have relatives that fool people too. (All are "Vanessa" butterflies.) Sometimes people say they see "baby monarchs" migrating. But that's **impossible!** Do you know why?



**Monarch**  
Danaus plexippus

(Actual sizes)



**Painted Lady**  
Vanessa cardui

When someone says they see "baby monarchs" migrating it's **impossible** because:

A "baby butterfly" is a larva.  
(It can not fly!)



While there are monarch look-alikes, please don't be afraid to report what you see! We will help you with identification using other clues. Your location, the time of year, the habitat nearby, and even the butterfly's behavior can be used.

## Learn More!

- **Viceroy**: The butterfly that is trying to fool you!  
<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/Viceroy.html>
- **Queens**: The monarch's relative, but "It's a cinch" to tell them apart says Texas naturalist, Carol Cullar.  
<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/Queen.html>
- **Painted Ladies**: Another migratory butterfly that you can track.  
<http://www.public.iastate.edu/%7Emariposa/homepage.html>

## Draw a Butterfly

- Drawing forces us to observe closely!  
<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/IdentificationA.html>

## Keep Practicing!

