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The Incredible Migration of Monarch Butterflies

Every year, monarch butterflies take part in one of the most amazing journeys in the animal world. These tiny, delicate creatures, known for their bright orange and black wings, migrate thousands of miles to escape the cold and find warmer places to live during the winter. This trip is called migration, and it is one of the longest migrations of any insect!

Monarch butterflies need warm weather and plenty of food to survive. They eat nectar from flowers, and as fall approaches in places like the United States and Canada, the weather becomes too cold, and flowers stop blooming. To stay alive, monarchs must travel to warmer climates where they can find the food they need and avoid freezing temperatures.

Most monarch butterflies in North America fly south to the mountains of central Mexico. They gather in large groups, called colonies, in special forests that have just the right conditions to keep them safe through the winter. Other monarchs, especially those that live along the western coast, travel to warmer places like California.

The distance monarchs travel is incredible! Some butterflies fly more than 2,000 miles to reach their winter homes. Along the way, they face many challenges, such as bad weather, lack of food, and even predators. Still, millions of monarchs complete the journey every year.



Monarchs gathered in Mexico

Even though the monarchs that migrate have never been to their winter homes before, they somehow know exactly where to go. Scientists believe that monarch butterflies use the position of the sun and the Earth's magnetic field to help guide them. They are also able to sense changes in temperature, which helps them know when it's time to start their journey.

When spring comes and the weather warms up, the monarchs begin their journey back north. But no single butterfly makes the entire round trip! The butterflies that migrate to Mexico in the fall are not the same ones that return in the spring. Monarchs lay their eggs along the way, and it's the next generation that continues the journey north.

Monarchs lay their eggs on a special plant called milkweed, which is the only plant their caterpillars can eat. As the eggs hatch and grow into butterflies, they make their way north, following the warm weather and blooming flowers.



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Monarch butterflies are not only beautiful but also very important to the environment. As they travel from flower to flower, they help plants grow by spreading pollen, which is needed to produce seeds and fruit. This helps keep ecosystems healthy.

However, monarch butterflies face many dangers, such as loss of habitat and fewer milkweed plants to lay their eggs on. Conservation groups are working to protect monarchs and their migration by planting more milkweed and protecting their winter homes.

The migration of monarch butterflies is a breathtaking example of nature's wonders. These tiny travelers remind us of the beauty and strength of the natural world, and the importance of protecting it for generations to come.

1. Why do monarch butterflies migrate? _____

2. Where do monarch butterflies spend the winter? _____

3. How long is the journey? _____

4. How do monarch butterflies know where to go during migration? _____
