

Unraveling Milkweed Mysteries with the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project

Milkweed for Monarchs

The monarch butterfly may be the most widely-recognized and well-loved insect in the world. Minnesota's monarchs migrate to Mexico each fall, but depend on milkweed as their only source of "caterpillar food."



Partners for Monarchs

This site is part of a nationwide citizen science program, the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP). Hundreds of volunteers throughout the US visit prairies, gardens, roadsides and agricultural fields every week to study monarch abundance.

For more information about the MLMP program and to see the data collected at this monarch site and others, visit www.mlmp.org.

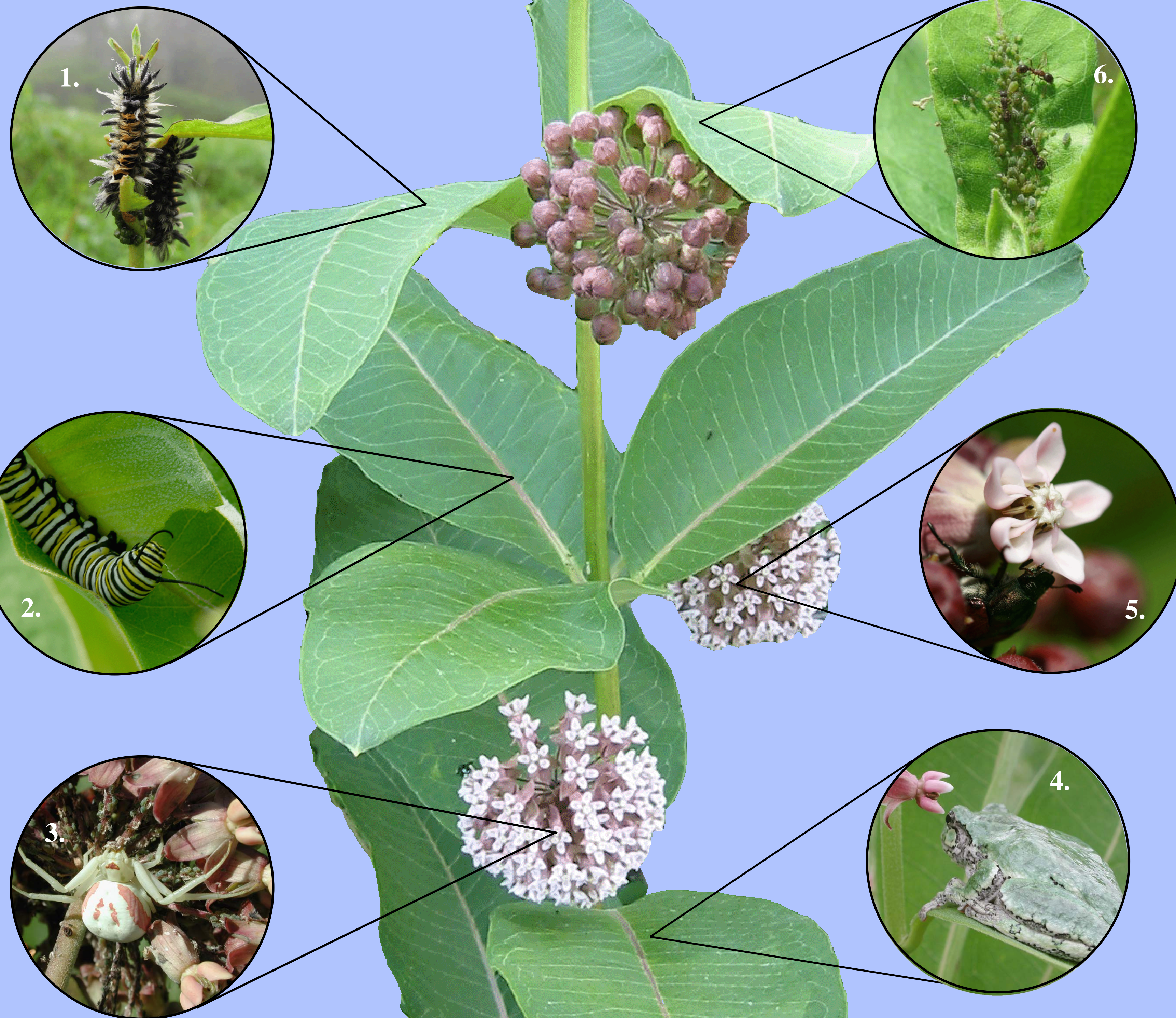
Photos by Mary Holland and Grant Bowers.



MONARCHS
IN THE CLASSROOM



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



More than Monarchs: can you find....?

1. **Tussock moth larvae:** Tussock moth larvae feed in groups, eating all but the milkweed plant veins.
2. **Monarch larva:** Milkweed is the only food for monarch caterpillars, but the butterflies nectar on many flower species.
3. **Crab spider:** Notice how well this spider is camouflaged. Spiders are common monarch predators.
4. **Frog:** Frogs and other insectivores are attracted by the abundance of prey in a milkweed patch.
5. **Milkweed flower:** Although there are over 100 species of milkweed in the US, all the flowers have the same unique pattern of a five-pointed star.
6. **Aphids:** Aphids suck fluid from plants. Look for ants tending the aphids, protecting them from predators, and receiving a sweet "honeydew" in return.

Milkweed Mysteries

MLMP volunteers are learning:

- What habitats and regions are most important to monarchs?
- What factors affect egg and larva survival?
- How do females choose milkweed plants on which to lay their eggs?

What's on a milkweed plant?