

The Journey Home...for Butterflies

Delicate, paper-thin wings glide on the breeze of a hazy August afternoon. In a beautiful pattern of orange, black, and white, the monarch butterfly flits among wild daisies and thistles in bloom. He is feasting on as many flowers as he can. He knows his time is short. Soon he must embark on a very long and difficult journey that will take him south to warmer temperatures. But for now, the warmth he finds from the sun here in Canada is enough. So are the flowers in bloom this time of year. God provides.

His parents did not live so long as he will. Nor did the generation that lived before them. They did not need to. In a matter of weeks they could find food and warmth in the spring and summer as they flew north and settled in this spot. Eggs could be laid, caterpillars hatched, and milkweed leaves eaten. Then the creeping white, yellow, and black striped caterpillars would nestle within their cocoons and transform into graceful butterflies of the air. The change appears almost like a miracle. Who can conceive of such a thing? But this is how God created them to mature and grow.

That might be enough of a wonder, but there is more. The butterfly is busily feeding because he is storing energy for an equally unbelievable trip. He's going home—though he's never been there before. From Canada this tissue-winged insect must migrate thousands of miles south, all the way down to Mexico. He will need to fly fifty miles a day, with little time to eat or rest on the way. He will need to live for almost eight months in order to get there. His parents lived for much less than half that time. How can all this happen? God has prepared him, and made him special. God will give him the strength and endurance. This butterfly will be able to make the trip.

The time for feeding is over and he heads south. Cool autumn breezes begin to fill the air. But this presents another problem. Butterflies cannot get warm on their own. They need the warmth of the sun soaking into their wings to be able to fly and live. How can he continue on? He flies high. Warm air rises, and so he soars thousands of feet high in the sky on his way. God has provided this path, too.

But obstacles are not yet over. This particular butterfly has come to the Gulf of Mexico. Hundreds of miles of open water is spread before him. Can he cross it? He can. And he will keep climbing when he gets to land, for there, 9000 feet above the sea in a mountain forest of Mexico, he finds home.

How did he know the way? We can't tell, but he is not alone. Millions of other monarchs have reached this place, and other nearby spots. Here they will spend the winter together, and here they will raise a new generation that will again head north in

the spring. It is the way God made these amazing creatures. It is the journey God gave only to them.

It is a journey, perhaps, not unlike ours.