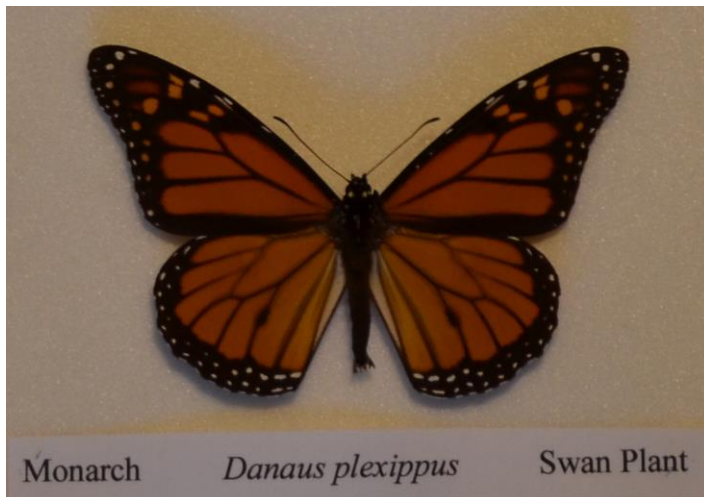


# Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)



Monarch, *Danus plexippus*, upper (worn), left, and lower, right.  
Photos: Euan Moore, left, and Cathrine Harboe-Ree, right.



Museum specimen. Photo: Tony Morton.

Note 1: The upper side of the butterfly wings are shown. Males and females are similar.

Note 2: The plant name on the bottom right refers to the plants upon which the butterfly larvae (caterpillars) feed.

**Other Common Names:** Wanderer, Milkweed Butterfly.

**Family of Butterflies:** *Nymphalidae* (Browns and Nymphs).

**Size:** Wingspan - 93mm.

**Local observations:** There are two records on Atlas of Living Australia from Castlemaine with another recent record on iNaturalist from Harcourt. Other nearby records are from Bendigo, Kyneton and Clunes.

**Tony Morton's documented records of Monarch from the local area (between 2000 to 2013): Two**

Date	Location	Notes
24-Feb-2006	near old Gaol. 1 seen	Castlemaine
27-Mar-2000		Park, Castlemaine

**Distribution outside our region:** This is an introduced species first documented in Australia (Queensland) in 1871, and later the same year near Melbourne. It is now found across most of Victoria. It occurs in all mainland states and Tasmania with most records being from the more populated areas. Monarchs are native to North and Central America where they are widespread. They have also been introduced to NZ and many Pacific Islands, Spain and North Atlantic Islands.

**Larval Host Plants:** Introduced plants including Swan Plant (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*). This plant may be found in some parks and gardens within shire. Caterpillars feed in the open. There is little predation upon larvae by birds, because of toxins ingested from the Swan Plant.

**Larval association with ants:** None.

**Adult Flight Times in Victoria:** Adults have been recorded throughout the year in Victoria, but never common (compared to northern Australia). No permanent population in Victoria, but recolonise annually. Some successful breeding does occur on cultivated plants. Most commonly observed between January to April.



Monarch caterpillar on Swan Plant, *Gomphocarpus fruticosus*, near the old prison, Castlemaine. Photo: Euan Moore

**Conservation Status:**

[The Action plan for Australian Butterflies:](#) Vulnerable in Australia

[Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999:](#) Not listed

[Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 – Threatened List:](#) Not Listed

**Other Notes:** Within its native range of North America this species is famous for its migrations and overwintering flocks. Migratory behavior and overwintering flocks have been recorded in the introduced population in NZ and there are reports of flocking behavior during winter months in Victoria (Observations, Castlemaine Naturalist, June 2021).

**References and further reading:**

Atlas of Living Australia – [Danaus plexippus](#), Monarch.

iNaturalist – [Danaus plexippus](#), Monarch.