



Danaus chrysippus

African Monarch, African Plain Tiger

Common name: **Butterfly**Latin name: **Danaus chrysippus**

Local name: فراشة



ECOLOGY

Type:

Wild

Role in Ecosystem:

Butterflies help keep the population of plants healthy by pollinating flowers they feed on.

HABITAT

The African Monarch is one of the most common butterflies in Sudan, and is found from oases and Wadis in the desert to moist savannahs in the south. They are attracted by flowers and prefer open habitats.



Food

Herbivore

The larvae feed on milkweed, locally known as *'oshar*, which is toxic. It is thought that this is the source of the butterfly's toxicity.

The adult butterflies feed on nectar from flowers and sometimes open wounds in plants, which also exude a toxic substance that deters herbivores. The adults use this toxin to deter predators as well.



Movement and Communication

Communication:

Butterflies can communicate with each other (same or different species) by their colours, chemicals, sound and physical actions. Colour patterns are used to signal their sex or species to each other.

Movement:

Their flight is slow and in slow motion through clapping wings.



Social Habits

Solitary

Monarch butterflies aggregate in large groups, in response to environmental factors, such as temperature or the availability of food. This also increases their chance of finding mates, as well as fending off predators.



Reproduction

Oviparous

Their life cycle is in four stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult.

Eggs: Females lay eggs singly on the upper or underside of the leaves usually hatches after three days.

Larvae: Also called caterpillars, reach 40-50 mm in length. and feed on milkweed leaves, which makes them acquire toxic compounds known as cardenolides

Pupa : Pupal period 10 days to 3 weeks. The pupa may suspend under a branch, hidden in leaves.



Attributes



Appearance:

African Monarchs are brownish orange with a black border.

Males differ from females by having four spots clearly visible on the underside of their wings, while females have three spots.

Size:

Female: 50 – 75 mm. Male: 50 – 70 mm

INTRODUCTION

The African Monarch, also known as the Plain Tiger Butterfly, is a medium-sized butterfly that is common in Africa and Asia.

It has a number of strategies for protecting itself against predators. It is poisonous to predators during its larvae and adult stages and, in the case of an attack, the butterfly has a tough, leathery skin for defence. It is also able to fake its own death by oozing a smelly and distasteful liquid to cause the attacker to release its grasp. This is a unique feature compared to other butterflies.

However, because these butterflies have few predators, many other butterfly species mimic their appearance. In Sudan the female *Hypolimnas misippus* is the most common butterfly that mimics all forms of this butterfly.

LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

Human interaction

No information available.

Cultural value

Butterflies are a symbol of gracefulness and beauty. Their form, patterns and colours are often used as decoration, particularly on women's clothing

Cultural expression

The African Monarch is believed to be one of the first butterflies to be used in art. A 3500 year old Egyptian fresco in Luxor features the oldest illustration of this species

THREATS

Monarch butterflies suffer from habitat disturbances, such as climate change. The human use of pesticides also affects these insects.

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