

## Butterfly Lookalikes

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Monarchs and viceroys are both butterflies, and they look quite similar. Both butterflies have orange wings with black markings. Both butterflies have some white dots around the outside of their wings. It can be difficult to tell one from the other.



In fact, this is a special kind of coloration called *mimicry*. Monarchs and viceroys are toxic to predators. This means that they are poisonous. Because the two butterflies look similar, other animals know to stay away from both of them.

But the two kinds of butterflies have some important differences. Monarch butterflies migrate each year, leaving the northern states to spend the winter in Mexico. Viceroy butterflies, on the other hand, stay in cold areas. They spend the winter as caterpillars rolled up into a leaf.

When they are young, the two butterflies have different foods. Monarch caterpillars eat only milkweed. In fact, this food is what makes them poisonous. Viceroy caterpillars do not eat milkweed. Instead, they eat leaves from willow and cottonwood trees.

It can be difficult to tell the two adult butterflies apart. But there is one important clue. Monarchs have two rows of white spots along the outsides of their wings. Viceroys have only one. Look at the butterfly in the photo. Is it a monarch or a viceroy? How do you know?

