

Beautiful but Toxic



Monarch/USFWS

Did you know that milkweed, the only food of the monarch caterpillar, is toxic to most vertebrates (including humans)? Monarchs are specially adapted to absorb the plant's toxins. As a result, most bird species find monarchs distasteful.



Viceroy/USFWS

Other butterflies, like the viceroy take advantage of the monarch's toxicity by mimicking their appearance. Though these butterflies are not as poisonous as their look-alikes, many birds are fooled by their disguise and leave them alone.

Look at the lower wings of both butterflies. The viceroy has a horizontal line across the hindwing (lower wing) and the monarch does not.