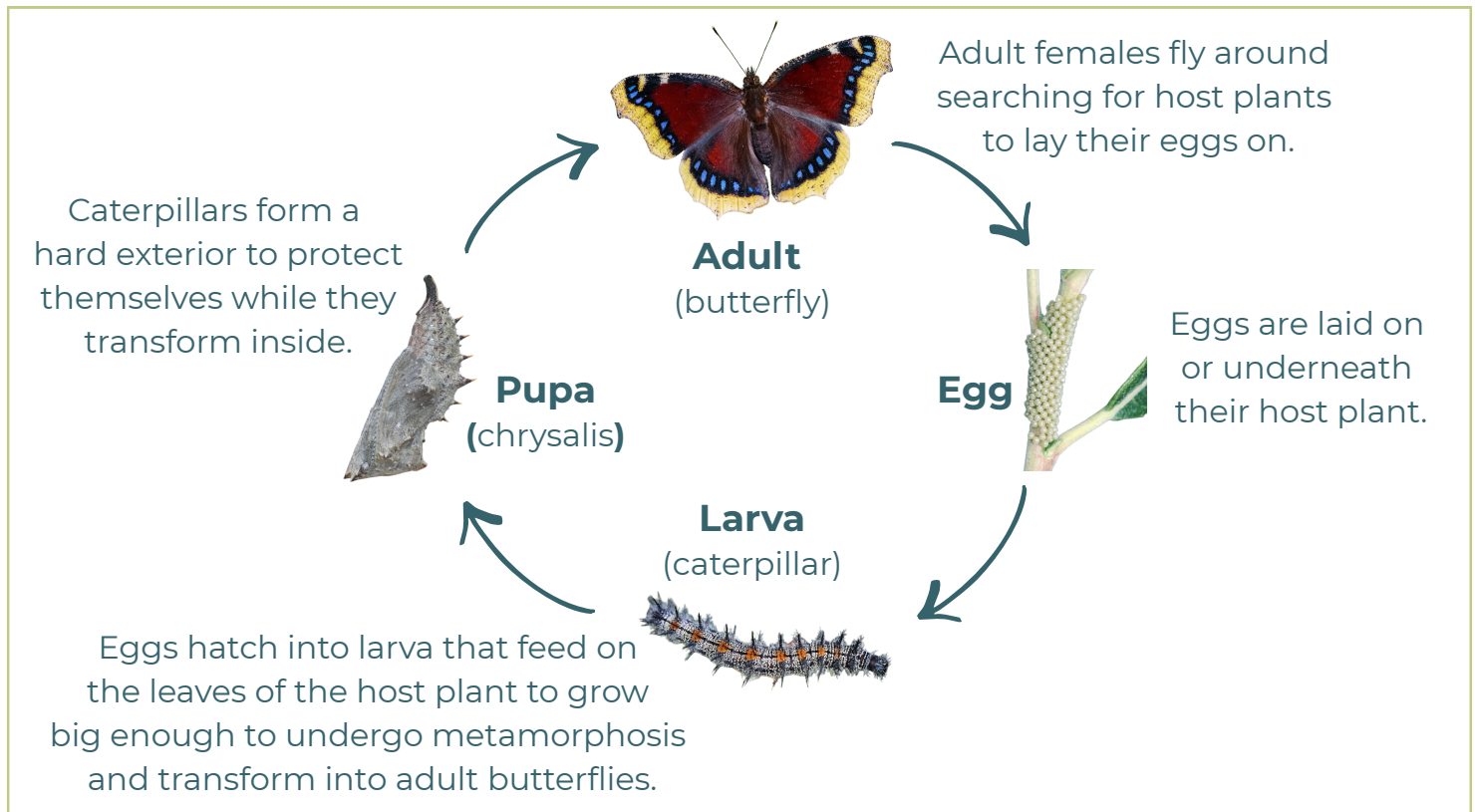


What is a host plant?

Host plants are necessary for butterflies and moths to complete their lifecycle. To understand host plants, we first need to understand the lifecycle of butterflies and moths. Let's use the mourning cloak butterfly as an example:



While adult butterflies can visit and drink nectar from a variety of different plants, **as caterpillars, each species of butterfly or moth can only feed on a specific type of plant** (or a few types of plants) **called host plants**. These plants provide food for them at a critical stage in their development. If the female butterfly is unable to find healthy host plants for her babies, she is unable to produce the next generation of butterflies.

Scientists are documenting a rapid collapse of butterfly populations:

- 95% decline in monarch butterflies in Coastal California since the 1990's*
- 22% decrease in butterfly abundance across the U.S. between 2000 to 2020*

The disappearance of host plants, and the use of pesticide on host plants and nectar plants contributes to these declines. You can help butterflies by growing pesticide-free native host plants.

Learn more at <https://www.rcdsandiego.org/creating-pollinator-habitat>

*Xerces Society of Invertebrate Conservation, 2025