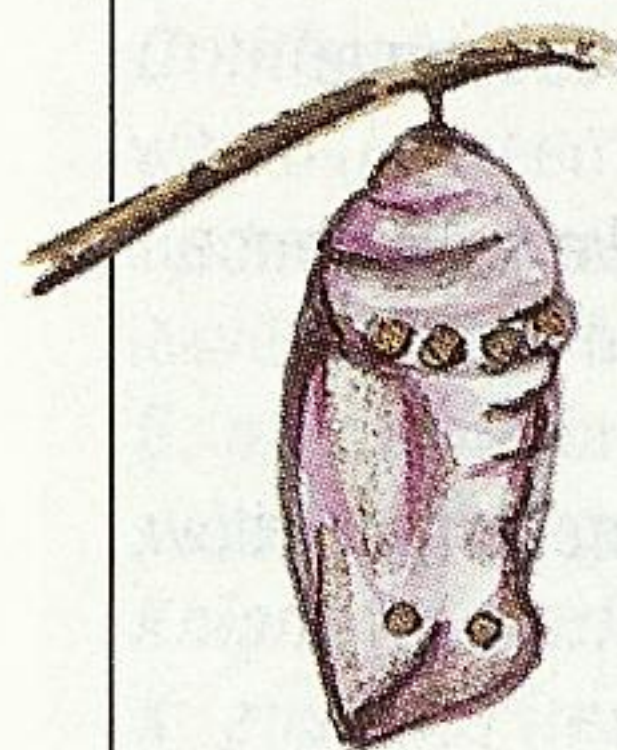


GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES



Above. The barrel-shaped egg of the African Monarch (1.2mm).



Left. The pupa of the African Monarch with its dusting of gold (20 mm).



Stapelia grandiflora.

The African Monarch is a common and widespread butterfly and can be found throughout the sub-continent wherever its host plants occur. The female will often be seen gliding gracefully around these plants most of which belong to the family Asclepiadaceae.

Just like a housewife at the vegetable counter, she will inspect each leaf carefully for freshness using the sensory cells in her forelegs and antennae. Satisfied, she curls her abdomen under the leaf and plucks a tiny cream coloured egg there.

If conditions are right, the lady Monarch may lay up to twenty eggs on one plant and she seems able to judge how many larvae it could support to maturity.

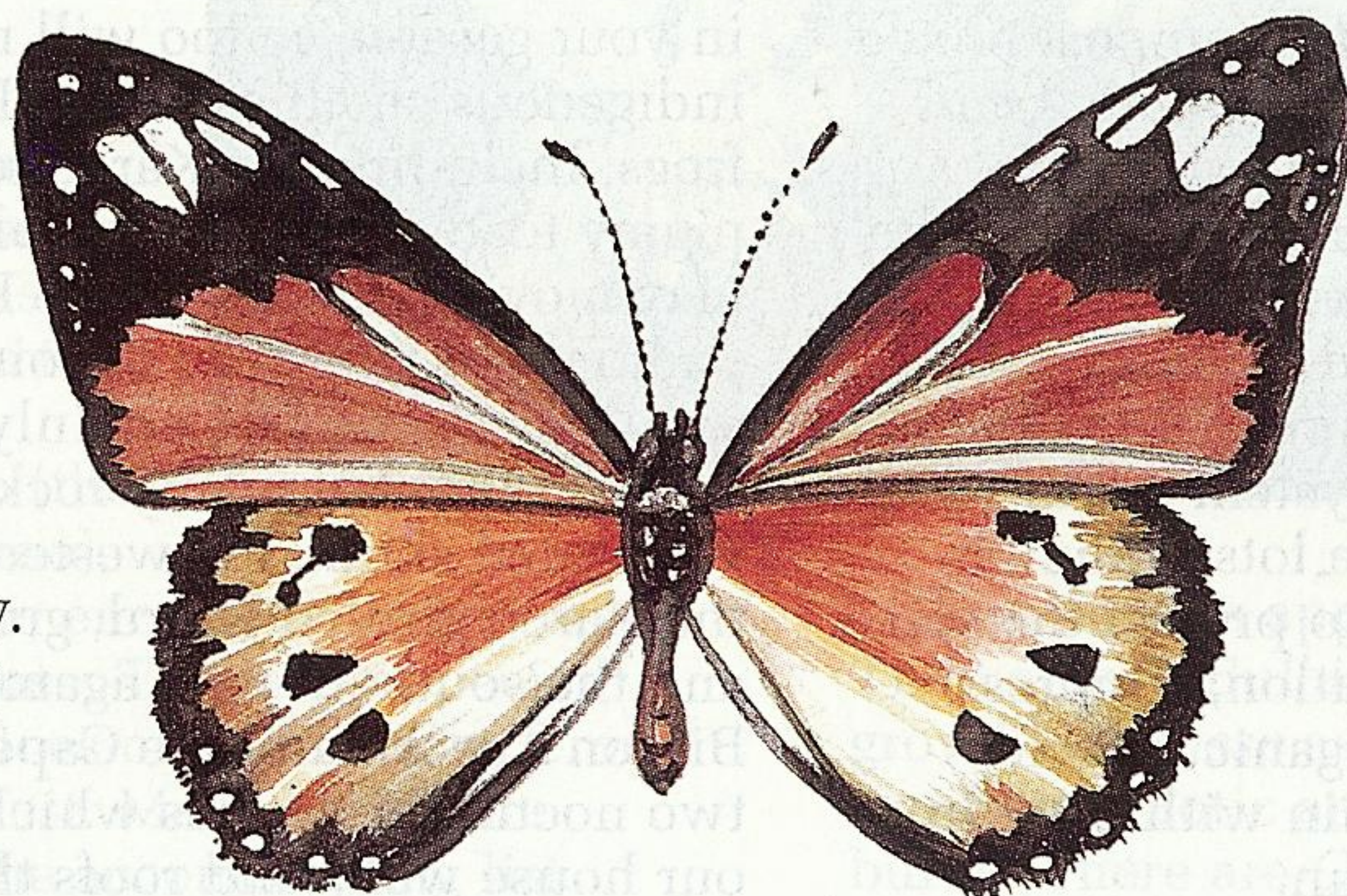
Over a period of about ten days the egg turns brown as the larva develops. On hatching, the distinctive black and white striped larva will eat its egg case for a protein kick-start and then proceed to nibble away at the leaves. At this stage it is extremely vulnerable to predation by spiders and wasps. These insects lay eggs in the larvae that will then carry the eggs until they

hatch inside them and provide a convenient first meal for the predator young.

Unlike many other butterfly larvae the African Monarch does not change its colour between skin sheddings (instars). After about twenty days the fat

or a pearl-escence white, it has a ring of gold drops near the top and a dusting of gold speckles over the case.

Inside, what was



The African Monarch *Danaus chrysippus*. The female is on the left.

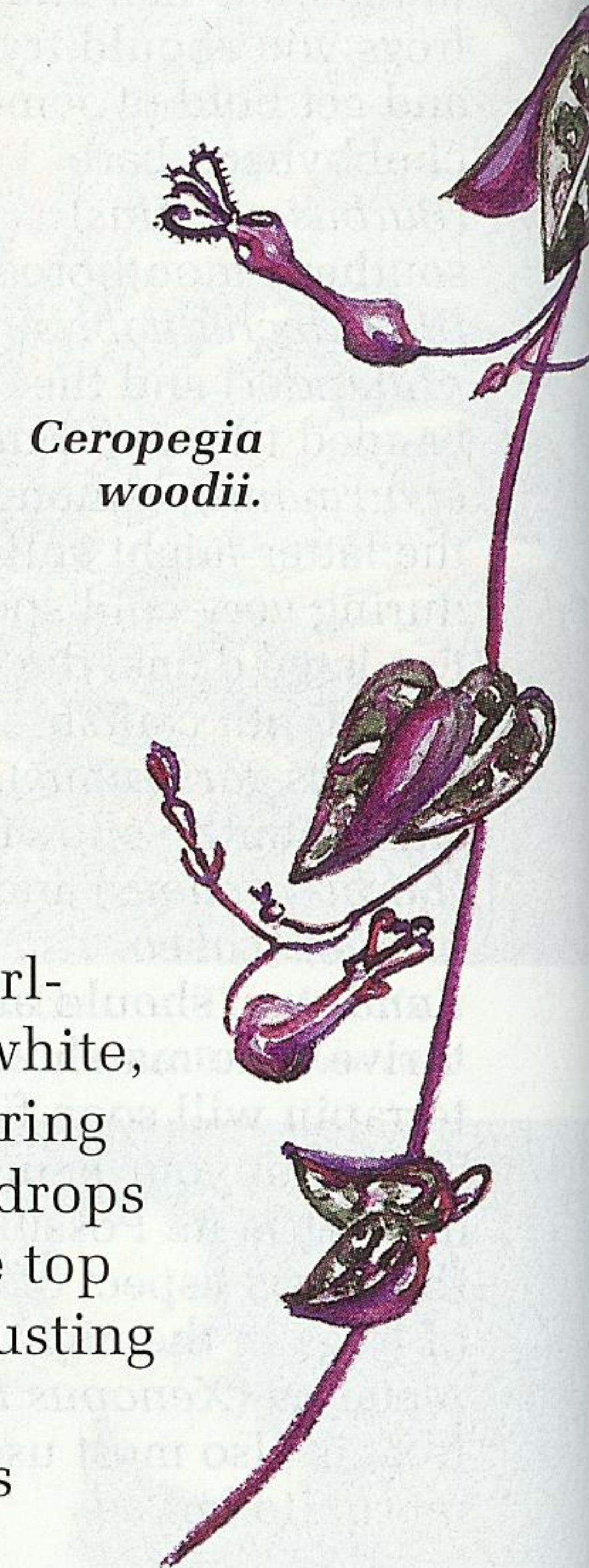
policeman will march off the host plant and find a suitable place to pupate. This was once in the nozzle of my vacuum cleaner!

The Monarch's pupal case is one of nature's jewels. Pale pink, green

once a gaudy larva breaks down into a 'butterfly soup' of fats, proteins and minerals which genetically rearranges to form a perfect butterfly (complete metamorphosis).



Left. *Huernia zebrina*. Right. African Monarch caterpillar (50 mm).



Ceropogia woodii.



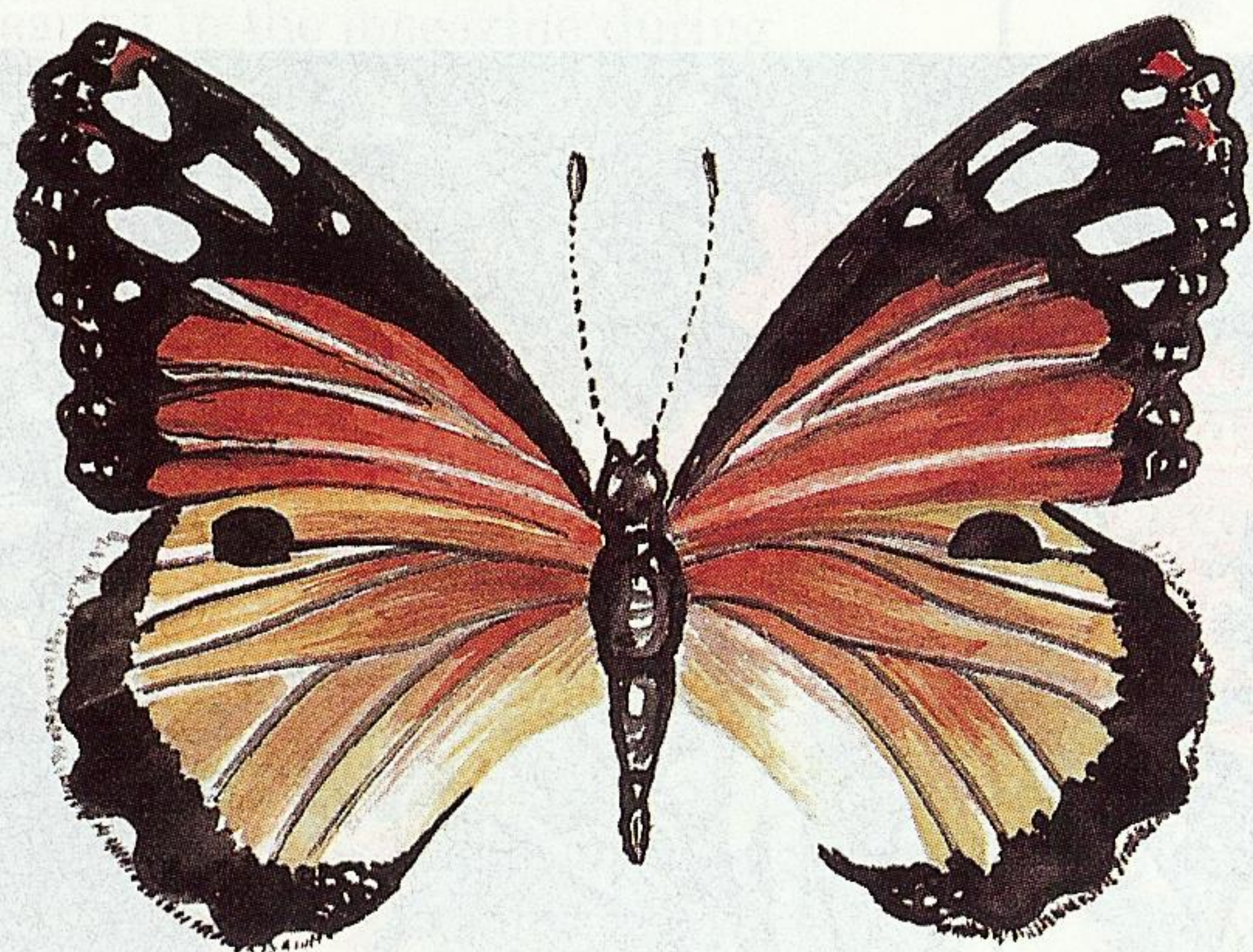
Asclepias fruticosa (wild cotton).

Generally speaking, the female Monarch is larger than the male and is distinctive for the three black spots on its hind wing. The male has a fourth spot (apical patch). During the mating dance the female will flutter her antennae over the patch which stimulates the male 'perfume' (pheromones) and induces him to copulate.

Known host plants of the African Monarch are *Asclepias* species, common roadside weeds, *Ceropegia*, *Stapelia*, *Huernia* and *Araujia* (members of the milkweed family). All are toxic which makes both larvae and

butterflies unpalatable to usual predators such as birds and geckoes and accounts for the leisurely flight of the Monarch. Other palatable butterflies like the Common Diadem (*Hypolimnas misippus*), the female form of the Mocker Swallowtail (*Papilio dardanus*) and two species of false acraeas mimic the colouration of their poisonous pal and fly through life unmolested. ♀

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A mimic of the poisonous African Monarch, the Common Diadem *Hypolimnas misippus*.