



135 Skok Hall
2003 Upper Buford Circle
University of Minnesota
Saint Paul, MN 55108
Ph. 612.624.8706
www.monarchjointventure.org

MJV Partners

U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Geological Survey
National Park Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Cibolo Nature Center
Green Schools Alliance
Journey North
Monarch Alert
Monarch Butterfly Fund
Monarch Health
Monarch Lab
Monarch Watch
North American Butterfly Association
Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever
Pollinator Partnership
Southwest Monarch Study
Tallgrass Prairie Center
Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

MJV Mission

Recognizing that North American monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) conservation is a responsibility of Mexico, Canada and the US, as identified in the North American Monarch Conservation Plan, this Joint Venture will work throughout the US to conserve and protect monarch populations and their migratory phenomena by implementing science-based habitat conservation and restoration measures in collaboration with multiple stakeholders.

This goal will be achieved through a combination of habitat conservation, enhancement and restoration; education; research and monitoring.

Dear Students,

The problem that I present to you today is one whose solution requires compassionate, creative thinkers. **As young scientists, you have the ability to consider the problem, analyze the causes, propose workable solutions, and put them into action to help save the magnificent monarch population.**

The population of monarchs has experienced a significant decline. While we saw more monarchs during the summer of 2014 than we did in the past few years, and will hopefully see more in Mexico this winter, it's unlikely that the population will be anywhere near as large as it was a decade ago. For many of us, this is incredibly sad. Like me, I'm guessing that you feel a strong connection to these amazing insects.

What caused this problem? In short, we did by taking more and more of the earth to grow food, build our dwellings and roads and shopping centers, and produce our energy. In the short term, changes in weed control in agricultural fields has meant that a huge swath of land – “corn belt” land that harbored monarchs’ milkweed host plants between rows of corn and soybeans – is no longer available. Previous weed control methods included cultivation, but milkweed often grew back after the cultivator went through a field. Now, genetically modified crops can withstand the herbicide Round-up (and soon, other herbicides), so farmers can spray a field to kill weeds even after the crop has sprouted. But really, that land was gone to hundreds of species of plants, insects, birds, and mammals when we plowed up the prairies over a century ago.

Organisms that depended on these rich and diverse ecosystems were pushed into the areas that were not easily farmable – areas like roadsides and hedgerows. In a way, monarchs were lucky because they used a host plant that grew well not only in these other areas, but because it could often withstand “old-fashioned” weed control methods, in the fields themselves. **Unfortunately, monarchs’ luck has run out, at least with respect to row crop fields.**

We probably can't change the U.S. agricultural system in time to save the monarchs or many other species. We need to be creative, to look at roadsides, utility and railroad rights-of-way, Conservation Reserve Program land, and yards as possible monarch habitat. Grass lawns are spaces that many of us can do something about. They do not provide us with food, cattle feed, or fuel. **In a single year, a Midwestern lawn can be converted to a habitat that resembles a prairie that was here before, providing food and shelter for dozens of species of the birds and insects that used to live here, including monarchs, if we plant milkweed.**

The good news is that many people are motivated to help monarchs, and monarchs can live in small pieces of good habitat. You can help, right in your own schoolyard and your own backyard. If you can make some space for monarchs, your backyard habitat can act as a bridge to other habitats, creating a habitat corridor or traveling path. Neighbor after neighbor, planting milkweed and linking nature preserves and neighborhood parks, can help to create habitat corridors that can help all pollinators.

You, as our nation's young scientists and environmentalists, can help the struggling monarch population by putting your creativity and knowledge of the importance of balanced ecosystems to work. Ask yourself what you can do to improve your schoolyard and your yard at home to help provide the much-needed habitat for monarch butterflies. Then ask yourself how you can spread that impact outward to your friends, neighbors, local community, and beyond.

The Monarch Joint Venture (MJV) is a national partnership organization focused on protecting monarchs. We look to you as future conservationists to help us by creating habitat, sharing knowledge, and generating more support for conservation programs like the MJV. **With help from students like you, I believe that the future of the magnificent monarch butterfly and its phenomenal migration can be saved for future generations.**

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen S. Oberhauser
Professor, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, University of Minnesota
Co-Chair of the Monarch Joint Venture Steering Committee and Director of UMN Monarch Lab