Mid-Summer Monarch Numbers Update

What a difference a month can make! Monarch numbers in early July were low throughout their breeding range, but we’ve seen a nice uptick with the second generation. See graphs for WI and MN, the states with the most observers this year, to the right, but the phenomenon is occurring throughout the breeding range. Right now, numbers are similar to what they were last year. Note that data from the week of August 2 were downloaded on August 3, when most sites have not yet reported for this week.

Here are some promising notes from MLMP observers:

From two-year volunteer Meagan Fastura in Albertson NY on July 22: I am happy to say I have started to see a lot more monarchs in the last week or two. I monitored today at the Botanic Garden where I work and found more than triple what I had been finding in the past 8 weeks. See Meagan’s data here.

From new volunteer Stephanie Zwyghuizen in Jamestown NY on July 24: The day after the virtual workshop I completed my first MLMP survey of the monarch waystation at the college where I work, and I have seen a rapid increase in monarch eggs each week since then. See Stephanie’s data here.

Other Updates/Opportunities

The Milkweed Adaptation Research and Education Network (MAREN) is excited to announce a new group of flexible observational protocols investigating milkweed phenology, herbivory, and pollination. The ultimate goal of this project is to generate information to support milkweed restoration practices while integrating rigorous research into classrooms and replicating protocols over large geographic scales. While the focus is on engaging educators and students, MAREN welcomes all kinds of participants. Protocols are based on MLMP Activity 4 (characteristics of milkweed plants) protocols, and we have shared all Activity 4 data with the project developers.

If you already observe milkweed for monarchs, consider making observations about milkweed plants and their associated invertebrate community as well. You can learn more at http://marenweb.com, and sign up for the MAREN mailing list here. If you don't want to collect and submit data, consider joining the Invertebrates on Milkweed project on the iNaturalist website to submit photo observations. A recording of a recent MAREN orientation for educators is available here.

Please direct questions to Emily Mohl (mohl@stolaf.edu).
Mark the Date! August 29 MLMP Training

The MLMP will host an MLMP training on August 29, 2020! This virtual workshop will include extended training, small group sessions with instructors, and a break to go outside and practice new skills. Hard copies of training materials and an MLMP kit are available for a fee. Like our virtual June MLMP training, this session will be relevant for both newcomers or individuals who are already participating in the MLMP or another monarch citizen science project. It will address requests by June attendees to provide more detail and time for questions and small group interactions.

Participants will learn about monarch biology, monitoring procedures, and data entry protocols; and have the opportunity to virtually connect with other volunteers across the country.

The four hour training will be conducted during two sessions, from 10am-12pm and again from 2-4pm (Central Time). During the break, you will have a chance to use your newfound knowledge, then share the experience with your peers and instructors! The training sessions will be held over Zoom. Instructors from the Monarch Joint Venture and UW-Madison Arboretum include Katie-Lyn Bunney, Laura Lukens, Wendy Caldwell, and Karen Oberhauser.

Registration options are here. If you would like to attend, but the cost of registration is a barrier, please contact Katie-Lyn (kbunney@monarchjointventure.org) or Laura (llukens@monarchjointventure.org).

Monitoring in the Time of COVID

Long-time MLMP volunteer Sue Payant has always taken special safety precautions while monitoring monarchs at a working railroad yard in Marquette, Michigan. She wears a hard hat, orange vest, and protective eye and foot wear. This year she added a mask. According to Sue, it takes almost as long to get dressed as it does to monitor. Check out Sue’s hard-earned data, from 1999-2020, here!

Here are safety reminders for everyone (see more in our June newsletter):

- Follow CDC advisories and regulations. Check for updates regularly and when in doubt, always err on the side of safety.
- Limit travel to decrease the likelihood of transmitting COVID-19 during this time of pandemic community spread.
- If you or any member of your household have COVID-19 symptoms, do not monitor.
- Be prepared for "leave no trace" personal care while in the field (restrooms may be closed).
- Discuss monitoring concerns with us: info@mlmp.org

You can support MLMP in many ways!

Please consider supporting our collective conservation efforts with a donation that supports training, materials, and maintenance of the data you collect. You can make a financial contribution today here.

Have a story from your site or art to share? We’d love to hear from you!

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