

October, 2014

Issue 5



## MONARCH JOINT VENTURE



## MonarchNet News A Citizen Science Newsletter

### Upcoming Events

- [Texas Pollinator PowWow](#) in Mansfield TX, November 15. Celebrate and learn about Texas plants and their pollinators.
- [Monarchs in the Classroom Insect Fair](#) in Minneapolis MN, December 6. Youth from across the country will share their research projects.



*Milkweed seeds, by Wendy Caldwell*

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### *Citizen Science Updates*

#### SciStarter to receive \$35,000 to advance citizen science

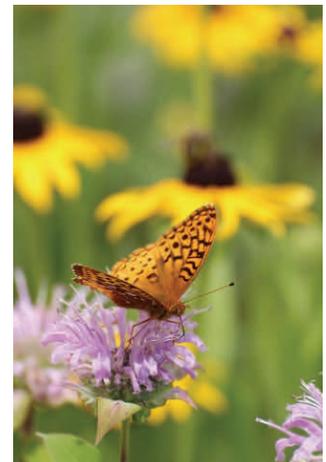
- SciStarter, which features an extensive database of worldwide citizen science projects, was recently awarded \$35,000 in funding from the Knight Foundation. The funds will be used to build connections between citizen scientists, researchers, and journalists. To find out more about the organization, visit [scistarter.com](http://scistarter.com).

#### Citizen Science Association continues to develop

- The first year of the Citizen Science Association (CSA) continues to be a success. Planning for the CSA conference in February is in full swing, a logo has been adopted, and voting for the CSA Board will begin in November. The CSA is also now on Twitter; you can find them at [@CitSciAssoc](https://twitter.com/CitSciAssoc). The CSA is open to all individuals with an interest in citizen science, and membership is still free! To learn more, visit [citizenscienceassociation.org](http://citizenscienceassociation.org).

#### Study finds that citizen scientists contribute significantly to climate change research, but aren't always recognized

- A new researcher paper from scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the University of Wisconsin-Madison finds that research into the effects of climate change on birds is heavily based on data collected by citizen scientists. However, the authors also found that it is often difficult to tell whether research is based on data collected by citizen scientists, indicating that volunteers are not receiving full credit for their work and dedication. You can read the full article by Caren Cooper and colleagues at [plosone.org](http://plosone.org).



*Left: Monarch just before pupating, by Patti Keiper; Right: Great Spangled Fritillary, by Wendy Caldwell*

## *Program Highlight: Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project*

While many US monarch citizen science projects peak during the summer, the Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project is just getting started when the summer ends. Located in Cape May Point, New Jersey, project staff, interns, and volunteers have been monitoring the fall monarch migration since 1990. It was founded by Dick Walton, with support from Lincoln Brower and the Cape May Bird Observatory.

Three times a day, every day, from September 1 through October 31, Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project volunteers survey the local monarch population. They drive slowly along the same five mile route during each monitoring session, recording the number of monarchs they see along the way. This is by no means an easy task, given that during the peak of the migration season observers are often counting several hundred monarchs per hour. The project is also heavily involved in tagging the migrating monarchs; using Monarch Watch tags, they sometimes tag several thousand monarchs in a year.

In addition to their monitoring and tagging efforts, which contribute to scientific research, the volunteers and staff with the Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project are also dedicated to educating the public about monarch biology and conservation. Throughout the fall, they host monarch presentations and tagging demos to increase public awareness and understanding of the monarch butterfly. They reach out to schoolchildren and adults with information on the monarch life cycle, migration, and conservation. With such dedication to both monitoring the monarch population and educating the public, they are definitely playing an important role in monarch citizen science.

**Do you want to advertise a butterfly citizen science event? Email us, and we can include it in the next newsletter.**

For more information about the Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project, visit their website at [monarchmonitoringproject.com](http://monarchmonitoringproject.com) or their terrific blog at [capemaymonarchs.blogspot.com](http://capemaymonarchs.blogspot.com).



*A tagged monarch butterfly, by Wendy Caldwell.*

## *Volunteer Spotlight: Cathy Downs*

Over the past decade, Cathy Downs has become about as involved in monarch citizen science as anyone can get. It started in 2005, when, a few years into her retirement, she began the training to become a Texas Master Naturalist and started volunteering at the Kerrville Schreiner City Park Butterfly Theater, a massive butterfly garden. As the Kerrville site became a Monarch Waystation and a Monarch Larva Monitoring Project site, Cathy took a very hands-on role.

Since completing her Texas Master Naturalist certification in 2006, Cathy has collected citizen science data for the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP), Journey North, Monarch Watch, and the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). Cathy was not content with just collecting citizen science data; her true calling is for monarch education and outreach, especially about their habitat requirements. As she puts it, “I began to understand that the general public really wasn't informed about host plants and began to talk to anyone that would listen to me.”

This led Cathy to a number of new roles in monarch conservation education, mostly within the state of Texas. She became a trainer for MLMP, so that she could help more people become informed citizen scientists. She also became the Volunteer Project Coordinator at the Kerrville Butterfly Theater and a Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist. Since 2012, she has served as the Chair of the Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas program, a partnership between Monarch Watch and the Native Plant Society of Texas that provides funds to create public gardens or Monarch Waystations.

While Cathy enjoys all of her roles, she is most passionate about her work with children. In addition to all of her other positions, Cathy works with the Texas Wildlife Association on a distance learning project called the Magic of Monarchs, which reaches tens of thousands of children in 15 different states. Her work with children through the Texas Wildlife Association led to her favorite monarch moment. She describes it as this,

*I was working with Koy Coffey and Gracie Waggener of the Texas Wildlife Association on a land conservation field day for about 300 7th graders. Our station was plant ID and the station was set adjacent to the South Llano River bank. We went in the night before to set up and we noticed hundreds of monarchs roosting in the Pecan and Cypress trees at the river bottom.*

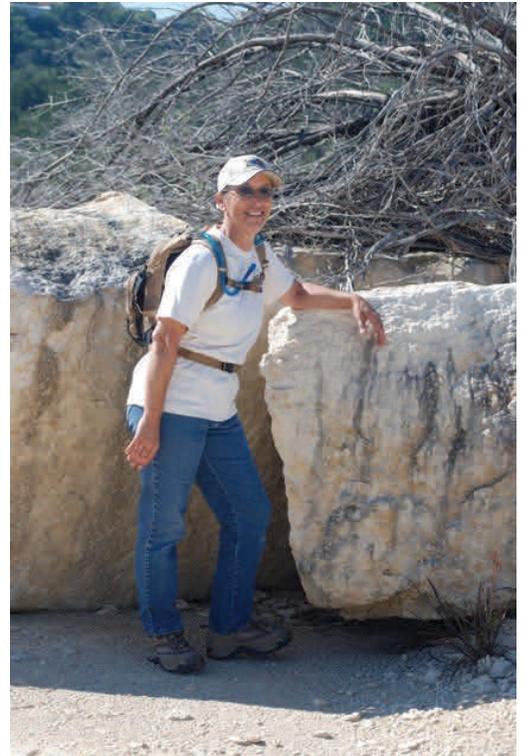
*We took note of this and the next morning, about 10:00 a.m. the roost started moving. We stopped everything and brought all of the kids down to the river to watch. It was an amazing sight for these children as well as for most of the teachers and staff that were working the stations. You could have heard a pin drop! The best teachable moment ever!!*

There are few things more impressive and memorable than a congregation of monarch butterflies. Interestingly, while Cathy didn't become involved with monarch citizen science and conservation until she moved to Texas after her retirement, she had some memorable monarch moments earlier in her life. While living in working in Santa Cruz, CA, she and her husband would often walk to Natural Bridges State Beach, one of the sites where the western population of monarchs overwinters. There they would watch the large groups of monarchs in the eucalyptus trees. Perhaps these experiences laid the foundation for her fervent involvement in monarch citizen science and conservation today.

## *We want to hear from you!*

Are you are a butterfly citizen scientist with a story or a photo to share? Would you like to nominate a volunteer or program for recognition in the newsletter? Write to us at [monarchs@monarchjointventure.org](mailto:monarchs@monarchjointventure.org) with what you would like to see in the newsletter.

Help us spread the word. Send this newsletter to friends who may be interested, and encourage them to “Get Updates” under News & Events on the MJV website at [monarchjointventure.org/news-events/get-updates](http://monarchjointventure.org/news-events/get-updates).



*Cathy Downs enjoying a beautiful Texas day, by Cathy Downs.*