Spring 2019

Monarchs on the Move

Citizen scientists contributing data to the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project and Journey North are documenting monarch movement and reproduction at the beginning of this new season. MLMP volunteers at sites throughout Texas have recorded egg and larva densities as the monarchs returning from Mexico moved northward. As of this week, Journey North volunteers have documented adult monarchs as far north as central Iowa, and monarch eggs as far north as St. Louis. Monarch Joint Venture and UW-Madison Arboretum MLMP coordinators in Minnesota and Wisconsin are eagerly awaiting the return of monarchs to our sites!

As the first generation of 2019 moves northward, we encourage MLMP volunteers to be prepared to monitor—recording the emergence date for the milkweed in your site and checking the milkweed for monarch eggs and larvae weekly. This will be an important year for us to document, as we assess whether the large numbers we saw during 2018 can be sustained.

If you have monitored for MLMP in the past, THANK YOU. We hope that you will join us again this year. And if you haven’t been an active MLMP volunteer, please consider joining our team. Your data make a difference! Feel free to contact us with questions or comments as you monitor this year. Our website also includes how-to videos and easy-to-follow written directions.

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project Featured in PBS’s American Spring Live

In celebration of spring, PBS’s Nature series is presenting American Spring Live on Monday, April 29 – Wednesday, May 1. These three episodes illustrate the amazing biological changes triggered by the season, with live locations spread across the US. They premiere on the dates listed below at 8:00 p.m. ET on PBS and facebook.com/PBSNature.

Episode 1: “Birth and Rebirth” Monday, April 29. See how rising temperatures and longer days spur plants to awaken and flower and animals to seek out newly abundant resources.

Episode 2: “Migration” Tuesday, April 30. Join scientists and citizen scientists who track butterflies, birds, bison, and bats as they move from winter refuges to spring nesting grounds. The MLMP is featured in this episode.

Episode 3: “Connections” Wednesday, May 1. Learn how plants and animals depend on each other to survive and how climate change can break those connections.

To encourage citizen science participation during the live event and beyond, Nature: American Spring LIVE has partnered with the Bird Cams Lab and Celebrate Urban Birds projects (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), The Great Sunflower Project (San Francisco State University), The Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (Monarch Joint Venture and UW-Madison Arboretum), Track-a-Lilac with Nature’s Notebook (USA National Phenology Network), SciStarter (Arizona State University), Next Avenue (Twin Cities PBS), and the National Park Service.

Learn more about these episodes and how to participate:
https://monarchlab.org/mlmp/monitoring/american-spring-live/
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/american-spring-live/
Journey North Migrates to University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum

In case you missed the big news, we are pleased to announce that, after 25 years, the Journey North program has moved to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. This move represents an exciting crossroads for one of the largest citizen science programs in North America. Since 1995, just as the internet age was dawning, Journey North has provided an online citizen science platform that allows an international audience to track migration of critical species. Today, the Journey North community includes over 33,000 members who contribute over 50,000 migration “sightings” per year. UW-Madison Arboretum staff are excited to continue to support this citizen science program.

The Journey North Mission and Projects

The Arboretum is an ideal home for Journey North. The UW-Madison Arboretum focuses on ecologically sustainable relationships between people and the land through integrative, innovative, and collaborative science, stewardship, education, and public engagement. The mission of Journey North blends these approaches perfectly, seeking to engage citizen scientists in tracking migrations and seasonal change in order to foster scientific understanding, stewardship, and public engagement.

The Journey North program includes over 18 different projects – from tracking hummingbirds to annual ice-on and ice-off dates. Close to 9,000 members contribute to the monarch butterfly migration tracking effort.

Importance of Journey North Monarch Community Efforts

Researchers use Journey North Monarch data in a number of ways. For example, Dr. Orley R. "Chip" Taylor is developing a model that will enable us to predict the size overwintering population based on Journey North data. Dr. Andy K. Davis has derived estimates of the pace of spring monarch migration throughout the central flyaway.

A Wealth of Educational Materials for Youth and Educators

The Journey North program offers a wealth of material for educators who wish to inspire the next generation of migration enthusiasts. From detailing the life cycle to mapping the migration paths of monarch and other tracked species, the Journey North program offers “go to” websites for K-13 classroom teachers and informal educators alike.

Interactive Maps

The Journey North website features interactive maps for watching migration happen in “real-time”. These visualizations show just how amazing these migratory species are, and, perhaps more importantly, the visualizations illustrate how important it is for all of us to join hands across international borders to track migrations.

Become a part of the Journey North community by joining today.

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

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