



Monarch Butterfly Conservation Talking Points

Monarch butterflies migrate to Mexico each fall from Canada and the United States to overwinter in forested areas in mountains west of Mexico City. This migration is truly spectacular and is one of the most magnificent and intriguing of all natural phenomena.

The very existence of this migration is under threat due to illegal logging at the overwintering sites in Mexico and the loss of habitat due to development, land management practices and chemically-aided agriculture in the United States and Canada. These talking points further describe the value of the monarch migration, the benefits of conserving monarchs and the steps needed to conserve the monarch migration.

1. As the world's most spectacular and conspicuous long distance insect migration, the monarch migration has scientific and cultural value and should be preserved.

Monarchs utilize a broad geographic range during their unique and spectacular annual migration. This trans-boundary species is threatened by habitat loss in all parts of their range in Mexico, the United States and Canada.

2. Conservation of monarchs will benefit pollinators and many other plants and animals.

Monarchs can serve as international and iconic representatives of all pollinators. Monarchs use resources common to a large number of pollinators, and the size of their population therefore reflects, in part, the health of the environment for pollinators in general. The security and stability of our food sources and ecosystems are dependent on healthy pollinator populations, and conserving monarchs will protect the habitats for an abundance of species.

3. Understanding the status of the monarch population will help us evaluate many ecological problems, including climate change.

Decreasing monarch numbers resulting from habitat loss indicates other ecological problems at local, regional and international levels. Thus, better understanding of monarch needs and factors that impact their populations can have broad environmental benefits. Because of our understanding of the climatic requirements for monarchs during their annual cycle of breeding, migrating and overwintering, changes in the timing and location of monarch life stages provide indicators of climate change. Recognizing the realities and manifestations of climate change will

provide the basis for adaptive strategies designed to help maintain biodiversity and the integrity of ecosystems.

4. Many existing educational and conservation programs focused on monarchs are available and need additional audiences and support.

Government agencies and many non-governmental conservation and educational organizations in the United States, Mexico, and Canada are committed to supporting monarchs. Additionally, there are many opportunities for the public to engage in monarch research via several citizen science programs. All of these efforts need additional support to further engage the public, schools, nature centers, municipalities and government agencies in efforts to create habitats for monarchs.

5. Preservation of the monarch migration will require cooperative efforts to protect, restore and create monarch habitat.

Sustaining the monarch migration will require extensive efforts to educate the citizens and decision makers of Mexico, the United States and Canada of the value of the monarch migration and the necessity of protecting, restoring and creating monarch habitats. The cooperation of citizens, institutions, municipalities, government agencies and decision makers within these agencies will be enlisted in this effort. The North American Monarch Conservation Plan provides a blueprint for and commitment to action.

6. Financial and scientific support for monarch conservation is crucial.

In order for monarch conservation to succeed, we must increase our knowledge about monarch ecology and develop support for implementing research-based conservation measures. Funding is needed to support basic research on habitat restoration in different regions in each country. Also in need of funding are the educational, conservation and research programs focused on monarchs that are so critical in engaging the public and educating both the public and decision makers about the monarch migration. Of particular importance in the United States is better understanding of the distribution and abundance of milkweeds and nectar plants used by monarchs as well as knowledge of how to restore milkweeds to habitats from which they have been eliminated.



Monarch Task Force

North American Pollinator Protection Campaign

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