2025 TAGGING SEASON NEWSLETTER

by Kristen Baum,
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Greetings, taggers!

Welcome to Monarch Watch's 34th tagging season! Since the tagging program began in 1992, thousands of people have tagged over 2 million monarchs and we have received more than 20,000 tag recoveries from the overwintering sites in Mexico.

The tagging data have revealed new information about where the overwintering monarchs come from, the timing and pace of the migration, differences among regions, the impact of weather on the migration, and many other factors. These insights into the dynamics of the migration and the monarch's annual cycle are only possible with your help. Thank you for the time and energy that you generously donate to support this effort!

There is still much to learn about monarchs and their migration, especially as monarchs respond to shifting conditions related to climate change and habitat loss. We need more research to support monarch conservation and identify approaches for addressing current and future issues. We need your help now more than ever.

Tagging begins in early to mid-August north of latitude 45N, in late August at other locations north of 35N, and in September and early October in areas south of 35N. For additional guidance specific to your latitude, see the tables and maps on our Tagging Program page at **monarchwatch.org/tagging** or the tagging instructions section of the Monarch Watch app.

Visit **journeynorth.org/monarchs** to find out where people are seeing monarchs and to share your observations to help others plan their tagging activities. You can also sign up for our Dplex-L email discussion group at **monarchwatch.org/dplex** to learn what subscribers are seeing along the migration route. Information about monarchs is published throughout the tagging season on the Monarch Watch Blog at **monarchwatch.org/blog**.

Review our tagging how-to videos at **monarchwatch.org/tagging** for helpful information for new taggers or a refresher course for returning taggers.

Thank you for your support and if you get the opportunity this fall, share your passion for tagging monarchs with someone else. If you know someone who is concerned about potentially harming monarchs by tagging them, please share information with them from our recent blog post about tagging; this post includes the results from an experiment we conducted that showed tagged and untagged monarchs have similar lifespans. Good luck and happy tagging!
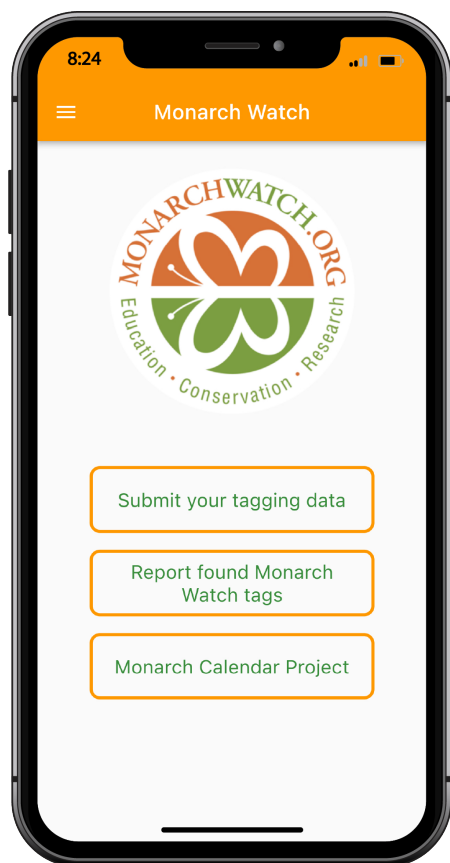
Goals for 2025

This season we want to continue our goal from last year to increase the number of monarchs tagged throughout the migration, especially towards the end of the season. More information about the proportion of late-season monarchs that reach the overwintering sites will help us learn more about migration timing and the implications of late monarchs and late migrations for the monarch population. Many people run out of tags before the migration season ends and it would help us to know when this happens. There is a place to report the date that you run out of tags on the online tagging data submission form. Thank you for sharing that information with us!

We also want to increase the number of "domestic" tag recoveries this year. "Domestic" recoveries are tagged monarchs that are observed during the fall migration within the United States, Canada, and northern Mexico. We receive pictures and tag codes to document these recoveries and this gives us information on how long monarchs are staying in an area or how far they travel during different time windows of the fall migration. To submit your sightings of tagged monarchs, visit **monarchwatch.org/tagging**. Your reported sightings can include monarchs tagged by others as well as monarchs you tagged that are still around the next day or days later.

We are continuing to request Monarch Calendar data (the number of monarchs you see each day) through the fall migration. More than 10,000 observations have been reported since the project began in 2022, with more than 7,000 observations last year. Thank you! If we can increase the number of reports and locations, this information will help us understand monarch population trends throughout the breeding season and fall migration.

You can report Monarch Calendar data from within the Monarch Watch app or by submitting them to us at the end of the year. Complete information can be found on the project page at **monarchwatch.org/calendar**.

Monarch Watch App

If you have a mobile device, you can download the Monarch Watch app from your device's app store. The app contains resources to assist you with tagging, including much of the information in this newsletter. Complete information about the mobile app is available at **monarchwatch.org/app**.

Tagging Monarchs

Monarchs are difficult to catch in flight. It is often easiest to locate them nectaring on flowers. For tips on catching monarchs, watch our how-to videos at **monarchwatch.org/tagging** or in the Monarch Watch app. We also have videos to show you how to hold a butterfly, how to identify males and females, how to tag a monarch, and how to submit data and report tag observations. Insect nets and other monarch materials are available from the Monarch Watch Shop at

shop.monarchwatch.org

You can record your data in the field using the Monarch Watch app or the included paper datasheet. Do not use the page number or "do not use" tags from your tag sheets as these do not provide data to the tagging program.

Recording Tagging Data Using the Paper Datasheets

• Include your complete contact information at the top of every datasheet.
• Record the complete 7-character tag code for each tagged monarch and double-check that the code is correct.
• Record tag codes in numerical order to make it easier to enter your data.
• Double-check that you have recorded complete tag codes, dates, and locations for each monarch that you tagged and released. Without this information, we cannot match tag recoveries to tag locations.

Submitting Your Data

Please submit your data once you are finished tagging for the season and **by the end of the year at the latest so your information can be included in an annual season summary that we plan to post online**. We can only use data from tag recoveries when we know where the butterflies were tagged and released.

Tagging data can be submitted directly from the Monarch Watch app or entered into the spreadsheet version of the Monarch Watch Tagging Datasheet using Excel, Numbers, Google Sheets or another spreadsheet application, and then saved and submitted using our online form.

Paper datasheets may also be scanned or photographed for submission using our online form. If you are submitting paper datasheets or pictures of them, check that all the writing can be read. If you are not able to submit your data electronically, paper datasheets may be mailed to us.

Datasheets and instructions are available at **monarchwatch.org/tagging**.

Monarch Tag Recoveries

Tagged monarchs observed in the United States, Canada, and northern Mexico are recorded in our "domestic" recoveries database. These recoveries are mostly based on tag codes and pictures submitted by people during the fall migration.

Most tag recoveries are from the overwintering sites in Mexico. These recoveries are based on tags found at the overwintering sites and the occasional picture of a tagged monarch from the overwintering sites. Each year we visit the overwintering sites, particularly El Rosario and Sierra Chincua, where we purchase tags from the guides and ejido members. There are many more untagged than tagged monarchs, so it can take many hours to find a tag among the dead butterflies on the trails and under the monarch-covered trees. We pay approximately \$5US for each tag as compensation for the time and energy spent locating it. Some of the tags we purchase are "old" tags from previous seasons. Make sure to check the recovery list for your previous season tag codes each year. We post recoveries in April, so check our website around that time or subscribe to Dplex-L to find out when tag recoveries are posted.

A portion of the cost of the tagging kits covers the purchase of recovered tags in Mexico. However, in years when mortality is high and the number of recoveries is also high, the cost of purchasing tags exceeds these funds. Tax-deductible contributions to Monarch Watch, which help offset the costs associated with running the tagging program, are always welcome and very much appreciated:

monarchwatch.org/donate

Thank you for your support!