

This Year You Protected a Natural Phenomenon

ONE THOUSAND CANADIAN CLASSROOMS INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF MONARCH CONSERVATION



MONARCH BUTTERFLY (DANAUS PLEXIPPUS)

Each November, millions of monarchs embark on a miraculous migration between Canada and Mexico. It's an epic journey that spans 2,000 to 5,000 kilometres in total, and takes several generations to complete. However, monarch numbers have plummeted in recent years as logging destroys their overwintering grounds, climate change disrupts their flight patterns and herbicide use in their summering areas decimates milkweed plants—the one and only source of food for hungry monarch caterpillars. Through our highly popular Schools for a Living Planet program, teachers and students across Canada are partnering with us to protect monarchs and the milkweed they depend on.

THIS YEAR'S SUCCESSES:

Because the monarch migration spans three different countries, so do WWF conservation efforts. We work closely with our counterparts in the U.S. and Mexico to protect the habitat these butterflies depend on.

- Over the past year, WWF's Monarch Conservation Fund provided \$174,000 towards monarch conservation projects such as supporting forest-friendly businesses, like mushroom production and tree nurseries, in the monarch's wintering grounds.
- In the lead-up to the 2014 North American Leaders' Summit, WWF called on Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, U.S. President Barack Obama and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto to take action to protect monarchs. They listened, establishing a trilateral conservation task force.
- During our first-ever Monarch Butterfly Week, 800 participants joined us for a live Google Hangout with Laurel Merriam, a member of the Monarch Teachers Network; conservation expert Steven Price; WWF-Mexico's Jorge Rickards G.; and U.S. monarch expert Dr. Karen Oberhauser.

LEADER PROFILE:

Laurel Merriam is a special education teacher at Brighton Public School; she has raised monarch butterflies in her classroom ever since her colleague Kim Strong handed her some milkweed and a tank with a couple of caterpillars in it. After taking a course with the Monarch Teacher Network in 2007, Laurel's middling interest in monarchs was totally transformed. Then, in 2008, Laurel and Kim

travelled to Mexico to see the overwintering grounds; she counts "being in Mexico, surrounded by millions of monarchs" among her most powerful experiences, and the one that sealed her fate as a monarch teacher. As a member of WWF's Schools for a Living Planet program, Laurel was part of our Google Hangout's expert panel, helping WWF to bring monarchs into classrooms across the country.



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"My students absolutely love having monarchs in the classroom. Teaching my students to love and respect monarchs helps me to cultivate in them a love and respect of nature in general."

THE BIG STORY:

In the March issue of WWF's *Schools for a Living Planet* e-newsletter, WWF put out the call to 12,000 participating teachers. There were 100 packages of milkweed seed to give away. Any takers? Within minutes, we were inundated with emails.

Faced with so much demand, WWF tracked down 1,000 seed packages for schools eager to create monarch butterfly havens.

There's something about monarchs that captivates children and adults alike. Perhaps it's their bold black and orange wings that signify summer to so many Canadians. Or the fact that these tiny, featherweight creatures, fluttering this way and that, can migrate thousands of kilometres. Or maybe it's the fact that one simple action—planting the milkweed they need to survive—could save them from extinction.

For years, monarch numbers plummeted owing to logging in the Mexican forests where they spend the winter. WWF successfully worked with local communities, the government, and the private sector to protect the area as a biosphere reserve. We also established a fund to support economic alternatives to logging.

According to scientists, the most pressing challenge now is protecting milkweed in Canada and the northern U.S., where herbicides and noxious weed laws have decimated the plant that feeds monarch caterpillars each summer.

A huge thank you to all the enthusiastic teachers and students who planted milkweed, put our lesson plans to work, and made our first-ever Google Hangout live broadcast with monarch experts such a success. With more curriculum-linked lesson plans currently in development, we're getting ready to roll out an even bigger program in 2015.

OCTOBER 2000

Crucial overwintering grounds in the mountains of Central Mexico are designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

MAY 2002

WWF creates the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Fund to give local people economic alternatives to logging monarch habitat

DECEMBER 2013

WWF reports the number of monarchs wintering in Mexico hits its lowest point since we began surveys 20 years ago

FEBRUARY 2014

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico commission a monarch conservation task force

MARCH 2014

Seven hundred teachers at 1,000 schools in Canada plant milkweed seed provided by WWF, creating vital monarch habitat

MAY 2014

Nature lovers from coast to coast join WWF in celebrating Monarch Butterfly Week with stories, facts, photos, and a Google Hangout with monarch experts

SEPTEMBER 2014

WWF introduces a new Schools for a Living Planet curriculum resource for Grade 6: Wild About Butterflies

2015

The monarch conservation task force presents its report at the next North American Leaders' Summit