



Monarch Larva Monitoring Project

www.mlmp.org

The Monarch Larva Monitoring Project is jointly led by the Monarch Joint Venture and University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum. It is a community science project that tracks monarch eggs, larvae, and milkweed throughout North America.

MISSION

The mission of the MLMP is to better understand the distribution and abundance of breeding monarchs and to use that knowledge to inform and inspire monarch conservation.

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MLMP is currently funded through generous donors. Donations provide support for volunteer training, necessary supplies, maintenance of volunteer collected data, and more.

About the MLMP

The MLMP was developed in 1997 by researchers at the University of Minnesota to collect long-term data on larval monarch populations and milkweed habitat. The project focuses on engaging community science volunteers to collect information on monarch distribution and abundance during the breeding season in North America.

The program was maintained under the University of Minnesota Monarch Lab through 2018, and is now jointly led by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum and the Monarch Joint Venture.



Monarch and Milkweed Basics

Monarchs have only one host plant: milkweed. This means that monarchs only lay eggs on milkweed plants, and the larvae, or caterpillars, only eat milkweed while growing. There are many species of milkweed plants native to North America. Each region has native species that are well-adapted to the local climate conditions. Milkweeds come in many shapes and sizes, with a wide range of flower colors like orange, white, yellow, and various shades of pink and purple.



A monarch egg takes 3-5 days to hatch, and the caterpillar takes 10-14 days to develop. Caterpillars stay on the milkweed during this period, except to escape heat or sometimes to molt. They often leave the milkweed to find a safe place to form their chrysalis, or pupate. The chrysalis (pupa) lasts for 10-14 days, and then the adult butterfly emerges. It takes about 4 weeks for a monarch to develop from an egg to an adult butterfly in normal summer conditions.

Adult monarchs drink nectar, so they require flowering plants to survive. When planting habitat for monarchs, it is important to include nectar sources as well as milkweed. While out collecting data on the milkweed plants in a site, make sure to look around and record any adult monarchs nectaring, mating, and laying eggs!



How to Participate

- 1. First, get trained!** Start with the MLMP online training videos, but also check for local trainers or training opportunities nearby. For more information, please visit <https://monarchjointventure.org/mlmp/mlmp-training>.
- 2. Find a site with milkweed.** Find an appropriate site containing milkweed that can be visited often, like a backyard, nearby park, or other public area.
- 3. Conduct weekly surveys.** Monitoring activities can be conducted alone or in small groups. Download the appropriate activity datasheet from www.mlmp.org to record observations. *While weekly surveys are encouraged for some of the activities, any data collection frequency is fine.*
- 4. Share data.** Set up a site description, add volunteers, and submit and view data online through the data portal <https://app.mlmp.org/>. At the end of each season, send hard copies of the datasheets to MLMP for verification and storage.
- 5. Submit non-site milkweed and monarch observations.** Observations of monarchs, milkweed, and other interesting sightings made at not regularly monitored sites can be submitted by anyone at any time, without setting up a profile for that site location.
- 6. Stay connected! Share stories & creativity.** Use the MLMP website to submit photos and other creative pieces. Sign up for the e-newsletter <https://monarchjointventure.org/mlmp/mlmp-get-email-updates> to keep up with research and share monitoring stories with the rest of the MLMP community.



Who Can Participate

Anyone can join the MLMP! Kids, adults, youth groups, or families—monitoring monarchs provides a fun learning experience for all. Join other volunteers from across North America to help us understand and protect monarch butterflies.

“My enthusiasm to monitor...monarchs is contagious to family, friends, and visitors. Teaching young and young-at-heart about one of nature’s magical wonders is truly rewarding.”

-MLMP Volunteer and Trainer

Why Participate

- With over 27 publications, MLMP is an important source of information to inform monarch conservation efforts and best practices.
- Enjoy and explore the diverse community of organisms that call milkweed habitat home!
- Watch your site change from the beginning of the season to the end, and from one season to the next.
- Join the network of people like you all over North America who are supporting monarchs!

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Photo credits: Wendy Caldwell, Laura Lukens, Rita Morris, Ken Epstein, Karen Oberhauser, Gail Morris



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