MONARCH JOINT VENTURE

2020 Annual Report



The Monarch Joint Venture's Mission:

To protect monarchs and their migration by collaborating with partners to deliver habitat conservation, education, and science across the United States.

Vision:

Our vision is thriving monarch populations that sustain the monarch migration into perpetuity and serve as a flagship for the conservation of other plants and animals.

Values:

- **Conservation** – The grassroots work that we do for monarchs and their habitat fosters resilient ecosystems and sustainable actions for the long term health of our planet.
- **Science** – The latest research guides our evolving conservation practices and leads our community engagement efforts.
- **Inspiration** – Educational efforts not only provide the latest scientific information, but also inspire others to be curious and take conservation actions that fit the needs and resources of their communities.
- **Partnership** – Authentic, supportive, and mutually respectful engagement with stakeholders from across North America leads to scalable and sustainable solutions.
- **Leadership** – Bringing people together allows us all to more effectively work toward common goals while leveraging our various industries, backgrounds, and areas of expertise.
- **Inclusiveness*** – Broad collaboration with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds creates an equitable environment for growth, sustained involvement, and innovation.

***Monarch Joint Venture's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

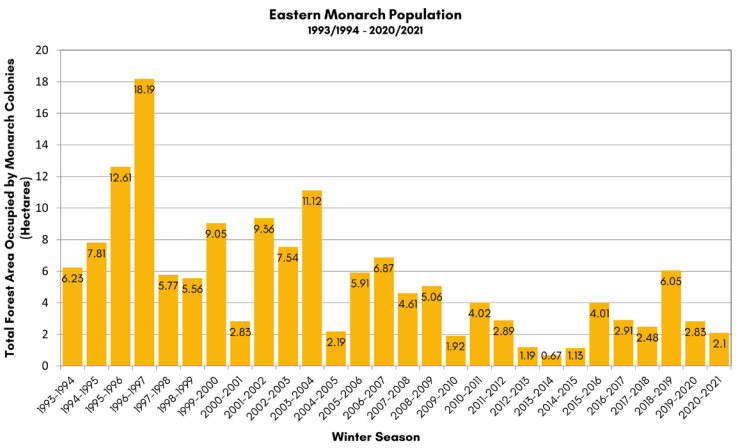
The conservation of monarchs and our environment requires all hands on deck. As a national leader in monarch conservation, we are committed to working to bridge the barriers across our society. We all deserve access to clean air, clean water, and safe outdoor environments in which to live, learn, play, and just be. To achieve our mission, we must foster diversity, equity, and inclusion for all to engage in this work and the enjoyment of nature. We will work to address the biases within ourselves and the inequities within our organization and the network of organizations committed to conservation. We commit to learning, listening, and taking action to build a healthier planet and a more just world for people, pollinators, and other living beings.

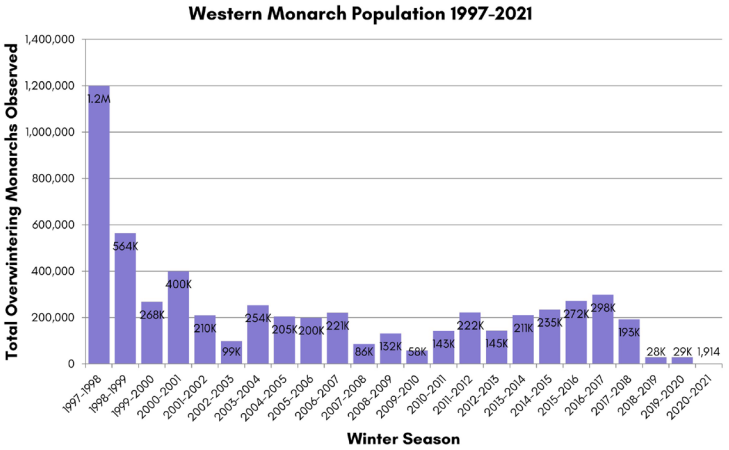


Monarch Population Count

Annual counts indicate a continued, critical need for habitat

Each year, conservation partners in Mexico and California conduct scientific counts of the monarch populations at butterfly overwintering groves. In the winter of 2020-21 counts revealed that both the eastern population that overwinters in Mexico and the western population in California decreased from the prior year. The western migration suffered dramatically. The total count of 1,914 monarchs represents a 99.9% decline in the population of migrating western monarchs since the 1980s. With a decrease of 26% from the previous year, the eastern population continues to remain well below the 6 hectare goal for a sutainable population size. We must use these annual population counts to motivate our continued efforts to scale up the creation, enhancement, and protection of diverse grassland habitat for monarchs and more. Supported by research coined "All Hands on Deck,"we know that it will take all of us doing our part to create habitat, educate others, contribute data through community science, and contribute financially to save this beloved insect.







From the Executive Director



For decades, the monarch conservation community has been studying the ups and downs of monarchs, their habitats, and their amazing migration. Like you, we too pause to do a little happy dance when a population measurement increases from the year before. We too find ourselves in tears when first hearing of the new record low population that feels impossible to recover from, for a minute at least. In both scenarios, the moment that follows is one of conviction to do more and to do better for monarchs. This is where the balance of nature and human nature come together. Nature can be very nurturing to its inhabitants, but it can also be pretty brutal – especially with the extent of anthropogenic threats that we as humans impose. As humans, we are intrinsically driven to protect the things that we care about, but we must think about that protection holistically in a way that supports the system in sustaining itself.

The 2020-2021 overwintering counts for both eastern and western migratory monarchs left most in fear of what might be next for monarchs. The western migration crashed, with fewer than 2000 butterflies counted along the California coast. An eastern population maintaining, but well below the sustainable popuation size left us worried about any possibility of a severe weather event that could further decimate the population. In December 2020, monarchs became a Candidate Species, receiving some attention in the context of the Endangered Species Act, but not receiving protections from the legislation just yet. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will now conduct an annual review to see if the status of monarchs has changed enough to bump them up on the priority list, but if not, they expect to move forward on their "warranted [for listing], but precluded by other higher priority actions" finding in 2024. In the meantime, we need more proactive and voluntary conservation to restore monarch populations to levels that they no longer warrant those legal protections.

Monarchs are an incredibly studied organism, but their system is so complex that research can often result in a lot of statements of "it depends." It depends on climate variables, it depends on threats from natural enemies, it depends on exposure to anthropegenic threats, it depends on how accurately we can model or predict current and future habitat conditions in different land use sectors, and the list goes on. As we continue to study monarchs in different regions, land use types, time frames, life cycle stages, or annual cycle stages, we grow in our systems thinking approach for effective conversation. There is no recipe (for which we have or can afford all of the ingredients) for guaranteed success in restoring monarch populations to a sustainable size. It will require passion, innovation, and widespread dedication to working together – and the Monarch Joint Venture is here to help.

Thank You

Thank you to all of you for being on this journey with the MJV. Without the people dedicated to our mission, monarchs and other pollinators would be in an even more dire situation. Thank you to our staff, board, advisors, partners, donors, funders, followers, and other stakeholders for all that you do for this important cause.

Wendy Caldwell

Wendy Caldwell
Monarch Joint Venture Executive Director

From the Board Chair



So much of the last 18 months has changed us. Experiencing a pandemic has taken a toll on us as individuals and as a society. It's been stressful, challenging and marked, for many, by loss. It has also be clarifying, setting priorities and illuminating what matters most.

For me, the importance of connection is near the top of that list. Never more vitally have I had to do the work of reaching out with purpose – to loved ones, colleagues, clients, neighbors. Like you, I had to get innovative, quickly, to fuel myself for living, for working, and for my own psyche.

And if you're like me, connecting to the natural world also became a savior. To be outdoors, with the safe and steady hand of familiar seasons and species was its own solace.

Upon reflection, what I love most about the Monarch Joint Venture is these very same vital connections. Monarch conservation depends entirely on our capacity to work a larger plan together. To do right together. To work scientifically and share emerging information. To invite partners, friends and the public to learn and do best practice. To work the collective to care for the species. The Monarch Joint Venture does this daily, not only with its 100+ partners, but with numerous other institutions, public groups, businesses, agricultural groups, schools, agencies, networks, community science projects and more. It is the work of connecting the work itself that is both so unique and so critical.

And like these human partnerships, I'm reminded of the myriad value the Monarch Joint Venture's work does to connect with nature, beyond *Danaus plexippus*. For birds, bats, grasslands, amphibians, watersheds, and countless other invertebrates – many of whose populations are also in peril.

To live a life connected in what we hope to achieve is really our one best hope for improving the viability and ultimate survival of so many of our declining and threatened species, including the monarch butterfly. Indeed, our connectedness is our best and brightest hope. What an honor it is to be part of this endeavor.

In this work with you,



Ann Hobbie
Monarch Joint Venture Board Chair



Education and Outreach

In 2020, the MJV adjusted educational programming to deliver quality content, training, and continuing education opportunities while maximizing safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outreach & Events

- The MJV co-hosted a total of **14 webinars** in 2020. Eleven webinars were offered to the public through the monthly Monarch Conservation Webinar Series, which averaged nearly 300 attendees per webinar. We partnered with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to offer 3 additional webinars focused explicitly on western monarch conservation, averaging nearly 200 attendees per webinar. All webinars are available for viewing on our website after the live event.
- The MJV provided over **50 virtual presentations** and engagement opportunities for a number of groups including schools, garden clubs, and virtual festivals around the country reaching several thousand people.
- The MJV team taught two sessions of the Monarch Conservation Short Course, a new educational program for our partners and the general public that explores the basics of monarch biology, ecology, research, and conservation. In its first year, the 8-week course attracted nearly **100 individuals** from across the U.S. and Canada.
- **82 people** participated in our virtual training workshops for the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP).

Monarch Curriculum Update
The MJV contracted with a curriculum professional to update the Monarchs & More Curriculum to meet Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). This update includes the latest scientific information and resources for today's teachers.

Professional Development

- In collaboration with the US Forest Service, the MJV held a virtual Monarch Educator Institute (MEI) for **30 teachers** in July of 2020. The content for the workshop was adapted for a virtual format and modeled different ways teachers could teach monarch and pollinator lessons in their own virtual classrooms.
- Teachers who complete a professional development workshop through MJV are eligible for a $1,000 Garden Grant to start an educational pollinator garden project in their school or community. In 2020, **18 garden grants** were distributed to teachers across the country.



Science

In 2020, the MJV continued coordination of two monarch monitoring programs, the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) and the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program (IMMP). We leveraged the IMMP to pursue specific research and monitoring objectives to measure the quality of habitat conservation investments. We continued to advance innovative technology for use in monitoring.

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP)

In 2020, the MJV established a co-leader relationship with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum to manage the MLMP. MJV personnel have worked with the MLMP for many years and this formalization of leadership brings additional attention to the care and growth of an important and long-standing monarch community science program. The MJV is responsible for program finances, maintains the project website, database and data entry platforms, and supports volunteer engagement. In 2020, 234 active volunteers reported MLMLP data, monitoring 338 sites across 41 states and provinces in the U.S., Canada, and New Zealand.

Integrated Monarch Monitoring Project (IMMP)

For the past two years, the MJV has collaborated with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to evaluate restored pollinator habitat using the IMMP. In 2020, two pairs of field technicians traveled across ten states between North Dakota and Ohio, visiting 120 sites in a variety of landscapes. At each site, technicians used the IMMP to survey adult monarchs, monarch eggs and larvae, flowering plants, and milkweed. The MJV will use these data to look at different metrics of success for these restorations, such as how many sites are supporting breeding monarchs and how much milkweed these projects contribute to national milkweed goals.



With limits on in person training and support, the MJV used 2020 to focus on improving online data reporting and retrieval tools for the IMMP to increase user-friendliness, quality control, and data access. These improvements streamline activities for IMMP users and are necessary for effectively growing the adoption of IMMP protocols nation-wide. An online data-entry portal is nearing completion and will be ready for widespread use soon.

Remote Sensing Technology

In partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and Sentera, Inc., the MJV led a second data collection season to advance remote sensing technology development for detecting and counting stems of common milkweed by machine. Through an intensive machine learning process, the MJV is working with Sentera engineers to build an algorithm that can process images captured by drones over broad landscapes and use them to better understand the density of milkweed on the landscape. The next phase of the project will be to continue to feed new information into the algorithm so that it becomes more accurate, and then to establish effective and efficient field protocols and software for deployment to the broader monarch conservation network.



Habitat

In 2020, the MJV hired two new staff to support our habitat work through agricultural engagement. These Habitat Coordinators are based in the Upper Midwest and California and focus primarily on engaging farmers and agricultural stakeholders in those regions.



In the Midwest, we partner closely with Farmers for Monarchs, a campaign organized by a group of agricultural stakeholders to help increase farmer and rancher adoption of pollinator habitat planting and management best practices. The MJV Agriculture Program Coordinator provides technical assistance to farmers by helping them find appropriate cost-share or incentive programs and supporting them in all stages of habitat development and maintenance. Through helping landowners with these projects, the MJV is also working to strengthen the network of partners providing support in different regions and to improve the delivery of information targeted for this audience.

In the Central Valley of California, our Regional Pollinator Habitat Specialist has been working directly with farmers to provide one-on-one consultation for their pollinator habitat projects. This has been a close partnership with Project Apis m. who specializes in providing farmers with free cover crop seed mixes to add pollinator value to their farms. In 2020, Project Apis m. offered a monarch seed mix and milkweed plugs to its farmer network, and partnered with the MJV Regional Pollinator Habitat Specialist to work hand in hand with those farmers to ensure their success in developing 20 acres of monarch habitat. The MJV is positioned to take over leadership of the California Working Lands Free Seed Program in 2021 to offer the monarch mix more broadly, while Project Apis m. will maintain its longstanding cover crop program, Seeds for Bees.



Pollinator Habitat Help Desk for Midwest Farmers

The Monarch Joint Venture launched the Pollinator Habitat Help Desk in 2020. This new resource offers midwestern land managers a first step in figuring out how to identify and get connected with the information, the plant materials, or the people and organizations nearest them who can best support their pollinator project. Midwest farmers can call 833-MILKWEE to get their habitat project started!

Revenue and Expenses

2020 was the first complete year that the MJV operated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. During 2018–2019, the MJV navigated the process of moving the 10-year old Monarch Joint Venture from the University of Minnesota to become a standalone nonprofit.

Agencies:

Bureau of Land Management
Natural Resources Conservation Service (Oklahoma State University)
Transportation Research Board (National Cooperative Highway Research Program)
U.S. Forest Service - International Programs
U.S. Geological Survey

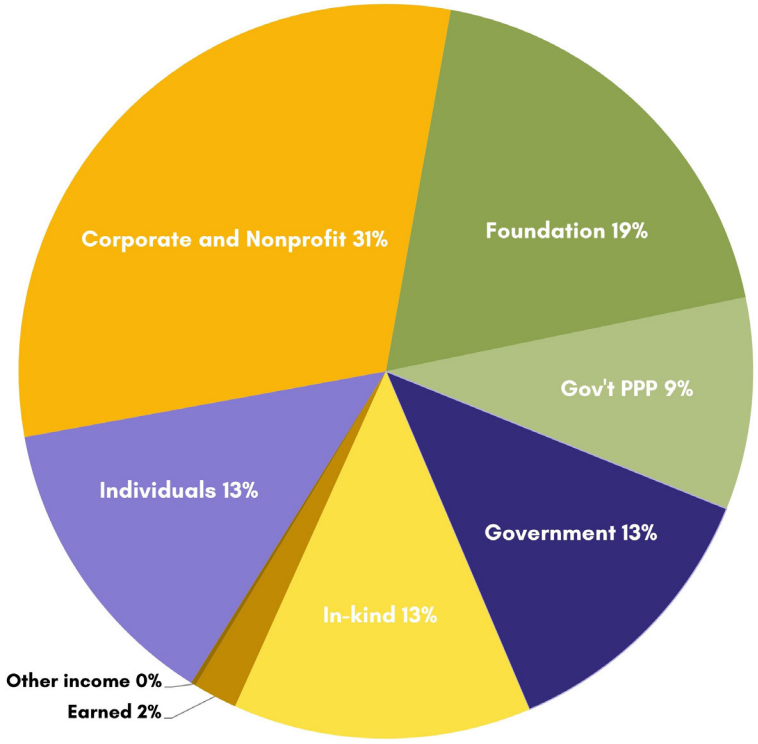
Foundations and Other Grantors:

AmazonSmile Foundation
Biodiversity Works
Environmental Defense Fund
Fabricon Foundation
Monarch Butterfly Fund
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
New York Community Trust
Propel Nonprofits

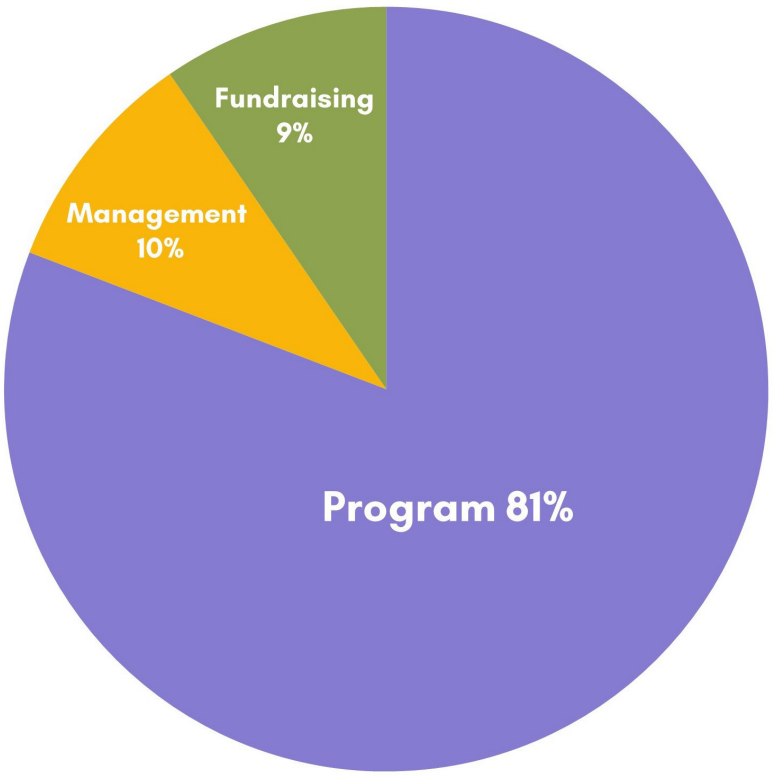
Businesses and Community Organizations:

Ameriprise Financial
Augustine's Bar & Bakery
Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund
Blue Aster Studio
Bremer Bank
General Mills
HCA Healthcare
Holly Yashi
Izzy's Ice Cream
Kathleen T Schlemmer Fund for Animal Welfare & Environment
Keystone Policy Center
KILT Realty
La Cruz Habitat Protection Project
Landbridge Ecological, Inc.
Minnesota Association of Environmental Education
Missouri Department of Conservation
Moon Valley Organics
SAP
Syngenta
Southwest Monarch Study
Unity Church-Unitarian
West Virginia Entomological Society

Revenue: $974,253



Expenses: $992,345



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Individual donors play an important role in ensuring the success of the MJV and our partners. Thank you to the following supporters who have become part of our movement to protect the monarch.

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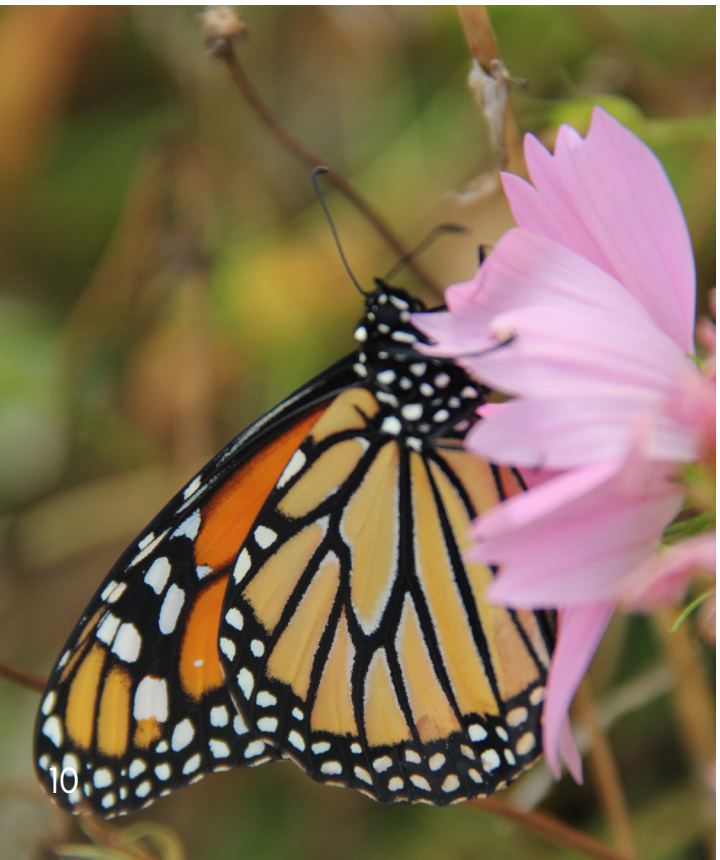
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The Monarch Joint Venture is especially grateful to these individuals who, in 2020, contributed ***$1,000 or more****:*



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2021 Priorities and Work

Western Monarch Recovery Fund. Launched in February, donations through this fund will support shovel-ready projects in the West. This fund supports programs such as habitat guidance to private landowners, overwintering site protection and management plans, milkweed production and seed collection, and free seed and plant programs.

Technical Assistance. Guiding landowners of all kinds to programs, plants, and information is a critical need that we're helping to scale up for pollinator work. We're increasing our capacity to work on-the-ground with landowners in critical monarch breeding areas, and ramping up MJV and partner incentive programs to bring habitat work to scale.

Habitat Monitoring. We're increasing our monitoring of monarch and pollinator habitat nationwide with our continued relationship with the National Fish and Wildlife Federation, as well as new collaborations with the Bureau of Land Management in California and roadside monitoring with the National Monitoring Highway Research Program (NCHRP).

Drones & Technology Innovations. We'll be continuing to use drones and technology innovation to support broad scale milkweed density surveying across areas that are traditionally challenging to survey quickly and accurately.

Education Growth. We're focused on growing our education programs and educator networks through additional workshops and updated curriculum that is adapted for all learning environments.

Broad Sector Engagement. We are in this together, and we need each other to bring about effective change for monarchs - no agency, NGO, or sector can do this on their own. We're doubling down on our efforts to bring "all hands on deck" and increasing our coordination of conservation efforts to increase efficiency and progress towards our goal of a sustainable monarch migration.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. To achieve our mission, we must foster diversity, equity, and inclusion for all to engage in this work and the enjoyment of nature. We're working to bring this lens into all aspects of our work, from updating our hiring practices, to increasing the accessibility of our resources and events, to developing accountability systems, this is just the start of our commitment to foster a more welcoming and diverse monarch conservation community.



Who We Are

The MJV partnership network has grown to over 100 organizations distributed across the United States! Partners include federal, state and local government agencies, NGOs, academic groups, and businesses. The MJV works to engage each of its partners to contribute their collective knowledge, experience, and resources to advance our common goal of monarch conservation as a flagship for broader environmental benefit. Equipped with the tools and resources they need to engage all hands on deck for monarch conservation, our partnership works together to ensure that the marvel of the monarch migration is not lost for future generations.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our partner network has not been able to meet in-person at its annual meeting. Virtual meeting fatigue was something we all had to navigate, but small and large groups of our partners continued to forge and strengthen connections through this now very familiar platform! In 2020, the MJV organized a series of virtual "Conservation Coffee Breaks." Through these sessions, we engaged partners in presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- The new MJV Partner Portal, a tool for facilitating network building and engagement
- Tracking habitat projects from seed mix to management
- MJV partnership training and skills-sharing
- Diversity, equity and inclusion in monarch conservation
- Western conservation and partnerships

Each conversation provided opportunities for network building and shared learning. The Conservation Coffee Breaks were well-attended by partners, suggesting that continued virtual engagement, in addition to in person meetings, provides an opportunity to increase connection and engagement with our growing partner network.



MONARCH JOINT VENTURE

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2161 University Av. W., Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55114

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Board Chair

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Grant Bowers
Dana Boyle
Mary Hedenstrom
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How You Can Help

Create habitat. Plant milkweed and other native flowering plants. Visit www.plantmilkweed.org for recommendations on how to create a pollinator-friendly garden.

Report observations. Participate in community science projects, such as tagging monarchs and butterfly counts.

Educate others. The Monarch Joint Venture offers monthly webinars and a variety of free, educational resources for teachers and others on its website.

Make Connections. Consider the circles of people and groups in your life and invite them to connect with the MJV and our growing partner network.

Share our work. Share the work of the MJV with your friends and family. You can share a video that provides an overview of our work, a post on Facebook, a photo on Instagram, or news from Twitter.

Contribute financially. Invest today and help ensure that resources are available to help the Monarch Joint Venture and other conservation-focused organizations implement the science-based recommendations in the annually updated North American Monarch Conservation Plan.

Walk, run, hike, or paddle. As an individual, or with a team, participate in Miles for Monarchs to help raise funds and awareness for monarch conservation.