MONARCH JOINT VENTURE



ANNUAL REPORT

2021



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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 U.S.

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.

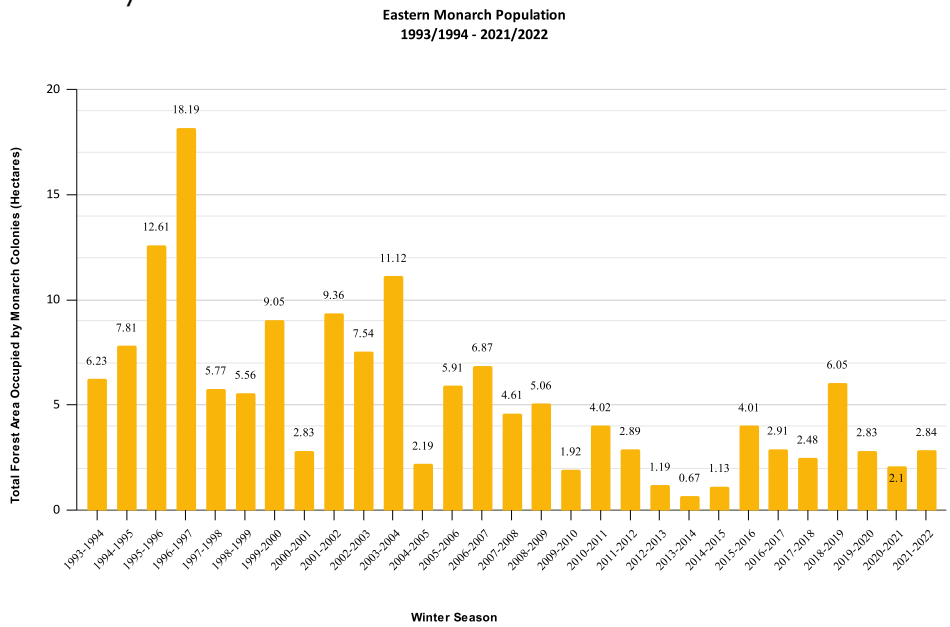
*Monarch Joint Venture's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion The conservation of monarchs and our environment requires all hands on deck. As a national leader in monarch conservation, we are committed to working to bridge the barriers across our society. We all deserve access to clean air, 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

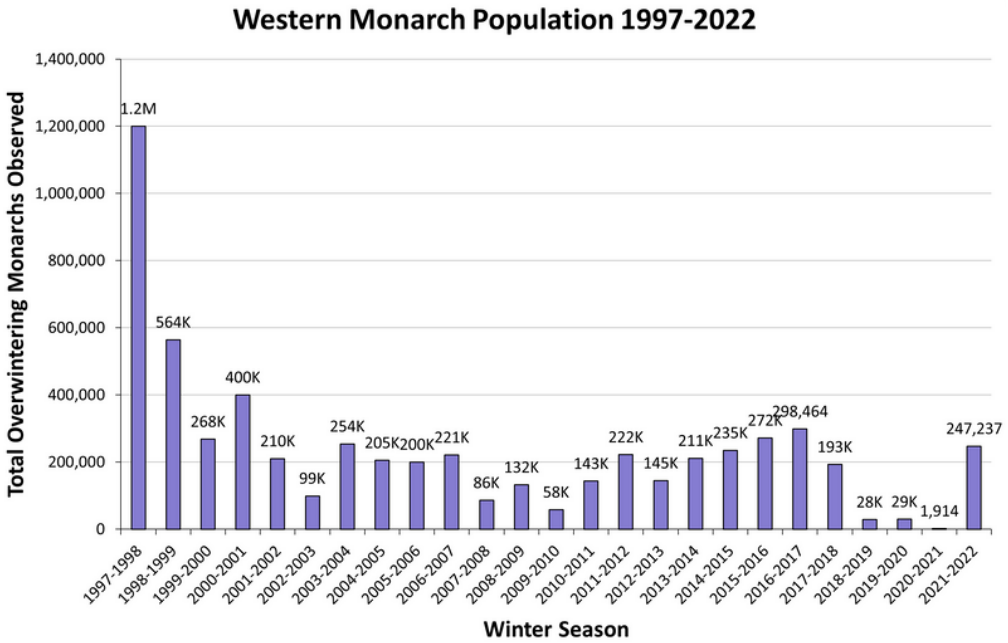
Eastern:

With the ultimate goal of sustaining the eastern monarch population at or above 6 hectares of area occupied in the oyamel firs in the mountains of central Mexico, a modest increase from last year's population (2.10 hectares) to 2.84 hectares is still welcomed news! A cool spring put the monarchs ahead of the milkweed in some places, and drought conditions in various parts of the country limited resources for monarch reproduction. Time will tell as the overwintering monarchs are counted in winter 2022-2023 how the collective habitat across North America supported the population this year.



Western:

There's been growing excitement about the increase in 2022 western monarch overwintering numbers, and also growing questions and speculation about the possible reasons for this drastic population increase. In conversations with monarch researchers and other conservationists, open dialogue is ongoing trying to deduce the most likely hypothesis for why this large increase may have happened, from an overwintering population of under 2,000 to 247,237 butterflies the following year. The population rivals the overwintering numbers that we saw consistently from 2013-2017, which relative to 2020-2021 count of 1,914 butterflies is a huge reason to celebrate. But we weren't celebrating five years ago; 200-300,000 butterflies still represents a 95% decrease in the population from historic numbers.



From the Executive Director



2021 marked the start of my 15th year conserving, researching, educating about, and engaging partners in monarch conservation. For me, monarchs do hold an incredible significance, but my drive is to support a much larger conversation – it isn't just about monarchs. With 15 years of insight into the population's ups and downs, the dynamics of a growing and diverse network of stakeholders, and the complicated nuances of what we know and don't know about monarchs, I continue to stand ready to meet the challenge ahead, engaging all hands on deck to protect monarch butterflies and more.

The community of partners and other stakeholders across North America has grown, and while there are certainly some hot topics and disagreement on certain issues, we all share a common purpose to conserve our natural landscape for the betterment of monarchs and other pollinators. Healthy dialogue among this community gets us all thinking about better, more efficient ways to support monarchs and pollinators, how to bridge gaps across other environmental issues, what research and tool advancements are needed to inform our conservation efforts, and how we can educate more effectively to engage everyone in improving our efforts.

Success in monarch conservation relies on all hands on deck, and success in achieving this all hands on deck approach requires leadership and coordination among the vast and diverse network of stakeholders. The MJV serves as an unwavering leader dedicated to this mission. I'm honored to lead an amazing team of MJV staff who work diligently to engage and support our network that spans the country and North America, and I'm proud of the work that we've accomplished in the last 15 years.



Yours in Conservation,

Wendy Caldwell

Wendy Caldwell
Executive Director
Monarch Joint Venture

From the Board Chair



Here's to the vision and commitment of our supporters that perceive the essential value of an organization like the Monarch Joint Venture (MJV). As a community engagement specialist, I've observed that not everyone understands the vital role of a neutral hub and the powerful ability to convene all the needed partners in solving large and complex challenges like those facing today's U.S. monarch populations.

It takes unique skills to sort and synthesize the ever-evolving scientific research – in our case, within the world of monarch conservation – and to communicate that out to organizations and individuals of all ages who can make the necessary shifts to support this charismatic and iconic species called Danaus plexippus. Beyond that, in focusing on monarchs and restoring healthy habitat, we are also helping to conserve many other threatened species of flora and fauna.

I joined the MJV board not as a biologist, but as someone who greatly appreciates the value of an organization that brings together stakeholders from dozens of domains. Our partner network today comprises 120 amazing organizations and individuals including biologists, ecologists, educators and federal agencies, as well as some of our country's most renowned wildlife conservation partners, regional nature centers and the all-important public.

As the leading voice in monarch conservation, we are leaning into the concept of "All Hands on Deck," where everyone, everywhere does their part. It's clear that our collective effort will make the biggest difference in successfully addressing the decline of the monarch and the very real threat to their incredible migration.

There are so many fantastic people and organizations already doing important work across the country, but what is an orchestra without a conductor? That's where MJV comes in! We appreciate your support as we pull together the latest scientific research from all corners of North America and provide direction to decision makers on the most effective and sustainable ways to protect monarchs and their environment – make that our environment.

Thank you for being a critical part of our work.



Yours in Conservation,

Dana S. Boyle

Dana Boyle
2022 Board Chair

Education and Outreach

In 2021, we continued to offer quality content and training opportunities while maximizing safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. We used distance learning tools and educational platforms to offer an online version of our teacher professional development workshop, continued to host monthly webinars, and provided one virtual monarch conservation course to the general public.

Outreach & Events

- The MJV hosted **12 monthly webinars** in 2021 through the Monarch Conservation Webinar Series, engaging hundreds of participants each month. The series reached a combined 1,062 unique viewers and featured 6 MJV partners as well as individual science, education, and habitat professionals within MJV's network.
- MJV staff collectively hosted **72 presentations** to groups across the US and Canada. 62 of these were virtual presentations, which provide additional opportunities to reach different audiences beyond where staff are located. The remaining programs were in-person at events or to audiences local to staff in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and California.
- The Complete Monarch Essentials Course welcomed **89 participants** to share and learn more about monarch biology, ecology, habitat, research and conservation work happening in the US, Canada, and Mexico. Participants came away with actions they could take to participate in conservation for monarchs in their own homes communities. First offered in 2020, this course reached nearly **400 individuals** in two years and continues to grow as an educational opportunity for the general public.

Community Science Trainings

- In collaboration with the UW Madison Arboretum, the MJV co-hosted 2 virtual Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) trainings. A total of **154 participants** learned how to identify different stages of the monarch life cycle and milkweed in order to monitor monarchs in their yards, gardens or other green spaces. MLMP data help us to better understand the distribution and abundance of breeding monarchs, and to use that knowledge to inform and inspire monarch conservation.
- Over the summer, MJV staff conducted two in-person Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program (IMMP) workshops with the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and coordinated with local volunteers to collect baseline data for a pollinator habitat restoration project. **14 people** were trained and conducted IMMP surveys at 9 sites that will be restored or enhanced.

Educator Professional Development

- In collaboration with the US Forest Service, the MJV held a virtual Monarch Educator Institute (MEI) workshop for **27 teachers** from across the U.S. in July of 2021. The monarch biology, ecology, and community science content was taught using a mix of live and asynchronous instruction and focused on modeled different ways teachers could use these lessons in their own virtual classrooms. Participants also become eligible for a schoolyard garden grant between $500-$1000 for participating in MJV's workshops.
- In 2021, the MJV hosted our first ever virtual enrichment series for **50 past workshop participants.** This series included presentations on new research, discussion on controversial topics in monarch conservation, how to use the outdoors as an effective teaching space, and how to plan a school garden.
- The 5th edition of the MJV's *Monarchs and More* curriculum was released in the spring of 2021 to be more closely aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). This edition includes a rearrangement of previous lessons to include 4 separate projects, followed by several supplemental activity extensions. The curriculum leads teachers and their students through various investigations to learn more about monarch life cycle and migration, other organisms, and the habitat they share.

Science

Field work abounded at the MJV during the 2021 field season. With our nationwide approach through the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program (IMMP) to gather new information that can better inform conservation efforts, we successfully deployed multiple field projects to advance monarch science. Additionally, volunteers engaged in MJV and MJV partner community science endeavors, and stakeholders supported us in disseminating the most recent science to our community of followers.

Research Review

In February 2021, we published the 2020 Research Review, the first annual review of academic literature published on monarchs and their habitat. For this project, members of the MJV staff and partner community read 67 papers published between June 2019 and August 2020. The resulting summary compiles key takeaways from the latest monarch research so we can share the latest scientific information in an accessible format.

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP)

The MJV co-manages the MLMP with the University of Wisconsin-Arboretum. Data collected through the MLMP helps us better understand the distribution and abundance of breeding monarchs. In 2021, there were 5,229 monarch density surveys (Activity 1) at 655 sites, 842 rainfall measurements (Activity 2), and 1,093 observations reported to the survival/parasitism activity (Activity 3).

MLMP was one of five official participating programs in the 5th annual International Monarch Monitoring Blitz, a tri-national effort to monitor summer breeding monarchs and their habitat across North America. Coordinated by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the 2021 Monarch Blitz saw the highest levels of participation. More than 2,000 volunteers across 80 states and provinces in North America shared 4,293 observations of monarch butterflies and milkweed plants between July 23 and August 1, 2021 across all participating programs.

Integrated Monarch Monitoring Project (IMMP)

The IMMP is a national program to collect milkweed, nectar plant, and monarch use data from a variety of land-use types and regions. This information is vital to shaping our understanding of how monarchs interact with their environment, documenting conservation efforts, and tracking the population and its habitat as they change over time. In 2021, there were 429 sites monitored across 16 states by a combination of MJV field technicians and volunteers. With some sites visited multiple times during the season, 2021 saw a total of 1,598 site visits/surveys.

The MJV managed two season-long monitoring projects in 2021 using the IMMP. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) partnered with the MJV for a third year of IMMP surveys on pollinator habitat restoration sites that have received funding from the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund. Four field technicians visited restoration sites in Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Minnesota.

A crew of four field technicians spent the 2021 field season visiting remote Bureau of Land Management lands throughout the state of California to evaluate the potential for monarch habitat. The crew utilized IMMP protocols to collect information about milkweed, flowering plants, and monarchs. In total, they surveyed 204 sites across 18 counties.

While not an official program of the International Monarch Monitoring Blitz, the IMMP contributed data to the 2021 International Monarch Monitoring Blitz.

Science continued

Roadside Habitat Evaluation

A team of two field technicians spent the summer investigating how much monarch habitat is present along U.S. highways in Minnesota. The goal of the project, in partnership with the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, was to learn more about the milkweed and flowering resources available to monarchs in roadsides, and to use that data to improve MJV's Landscape Prioritization Model (a tool that helps managers understand existing habitat quality and prioritize areas for conservation management and restoration). Field technicians visited more than 100 sites across the state and used a 15-minute Rapid Assessment survey to assess the quality of roadside habitat.

Minnesota Solar Habitat Monitoring

During the summer of 2021, MJV partnered with Minnesota-based nonprofit Fresh Energy to monitor pollinator-friendly habitat on Minnesota solar developments. Four PV solar installations were monitored during June, July, and August 2021 to measure the abundance and species composition of milkweeds and flowering plants, as well as use by monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Using data collected during the study, MJV and Fresh Energy have released the Monitoring Pollinators on Minnesota Solar Installations report to demonstrate the potential benefits of using pollinator-friendly ground cover with solar arrays in Minnesota—as well as areas that need further research.

Restored Mississippi River Farmland Habitat Monitoring

Working with the Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), the MJV monitored pollinator habitat at a restored site within the William H. Houlton Conservation Area in Elk River, MN. This area is in the multi-year process of converting 160 acres of farmland into native prairie and savanna. The site has been monitored for many years, and MJV's work adds to the growing body of knowledge about how prairie restoration can benefit pollinators and other wildlife.



Habitat

In 2021, the MJV maintained two regionally focused Habitat Coordinators, one based in the Midwest and the other in California. We recognize agricultural stakeholders as instrumental partners in reaching monarch habitat goals, and are actively involved in the Farmers for Monarchs Collaborative. Both habitat coordinator positions are primarily focused on engaging the agricultural community and implementing pollinator habitat projects on private working lands.

California Working Lands Free Seed Program

In early 2021, we launched the California Working Lands Free Seed Program. This program provides free technical assistance, native milkweed plugs, and a regionally specialized seed mix for pollinator plantings on private working lands in California's Central Valley. In collaboration with 22 farmers and ranchers we planted 30 acres of restored (new) pollinator habitat, and 310 acres of enhanced pollinator habitat. In total, 468 pounds of wildflower seed mix and 1,927 locally grown native milkweed plugs were distributed to farmers in 2021. We plan to maintain and grow this program in future years.

Pollinator Habitat Help Desk for Midwest Farmers

The Monarch Joint Venture continues to maintain the Pollinator Habitat Help Desk. First launched in 2020, this free resource offers midwestern land managers a first step in figuring out how to identify and get connected with the information, plant materials, or the people nearest them who can best support their pollinator project. Midwest farmers can call 377-HABITAT (377-422-4828) for support with planning or maintaining pollinator habitat!



Partnership

In 2021, the MJV partnership grew to over 115 partners 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.

Partnership Engagement

Due to continued travel restrictions and COVID-19 concerns, we hosted a virtual Partnership Engagement Series in lieu of an in-person partner meeting. Between November 2021 - January 2022, we engaged 80 members of the partnership through six, two-hour virtual sessions, which included presentations, discussion, and networking opportunities. November sessions focused on partnership updates on outreach and education, cross-species collaboration, habitat monitoring, and community science. In December, we heard updates from each participating government agency, and sector updates from rights-of-way and agricultural sectors. Breakout sessions focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, science communications, social media management, and fundraising. In January we focused on recent monarch research and western monarch current topics.

Partner Grants Program

After a pause during our transition from a University program to a stand-alone non-profit organization, the MJV was excited to bring back the Partner Grant Program in 2021 with support from the US Forest Service International Programs. Innovative, collaborative project proposals were solicited beginning in October 2021 from MJV partners for conservation projects to be carried out between January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023. Proposals were solicited in late 2021 from MJV partners nationwide. Eighteen projects were selected for funding, with a total around $400,000 being allocated to support actions outlined in the 2021 Monarch Conservation Implementation Plan.

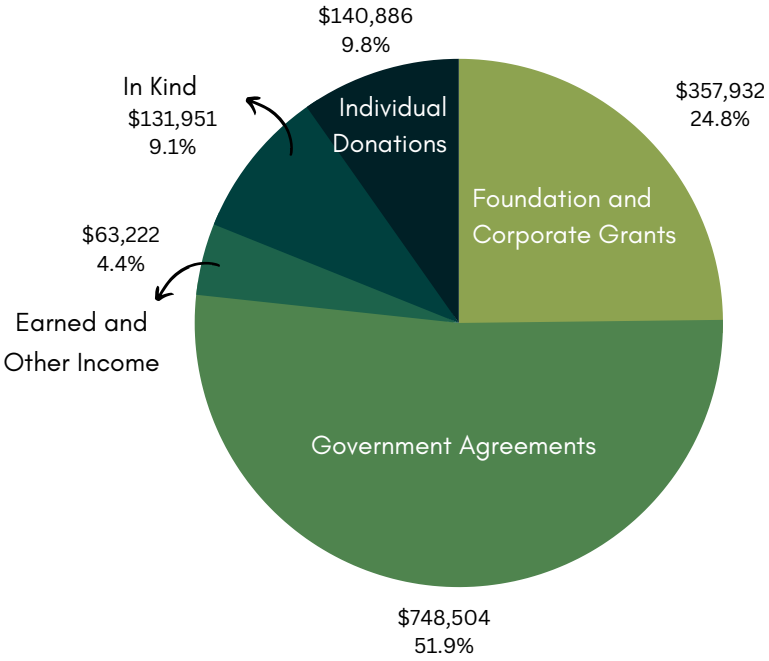
Partnership Support

This grant program and our partnership at large is now being supported by the MJV's first ever Partnership Coordinator. Joining the team in September 2021, the Partnership Coordinator leads the MJV partner network engagement and related projects. The primary goal of this position is to lead partner engagement through recruitment, strategy, and tracking of the MJV partner network and their activities. Our amazing staff team continues to engage the partnership in their education, science, and habitat conservation work.

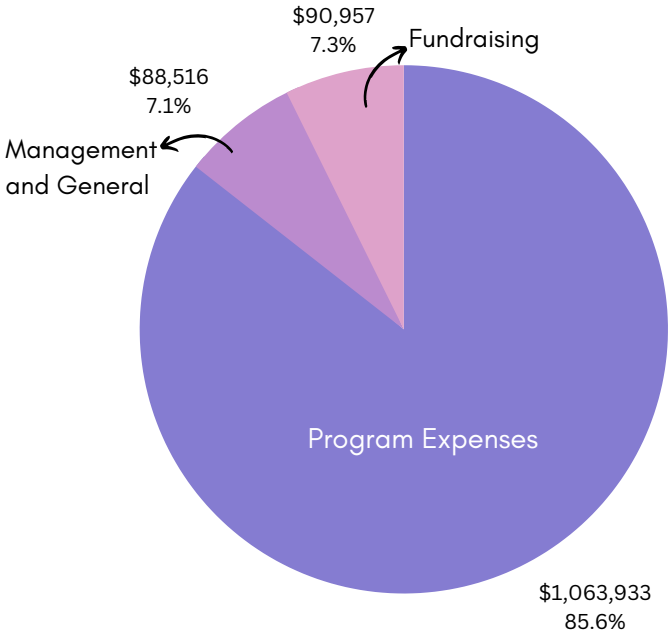


2021 MJV Financial Report

Total Revenue: $1,442,495



Total Expenses: $1,243,439



Net Operating Results: $199,056

End of Year Net Assets: $565,816

$10,000+ Funders

Forest Service U.S. Department of Agriculture

National System of Public Lands · U.S. Department of the Interior · Bureau of Land Management

Department of Transportation · United States of America

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation · NFWF

Bayer

Shavlik Family Foundation

NYCT The New York Community Trust

EDF Environmental Defense Fund · Finding the ways that work

Individual Donors

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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Leadership Circle

The Monarch Joint Venture is especially grateful to these individuals who, in 2021, contributed $1,000 or more:



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Anna Butler, Field Technician
Tailor Larson, Field Technician
McKenna Nelson, Field Technician
Leah Doyle, Field Technician
Georgia Lopez, Field Technician



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.
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. Donate 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 Monarch Conservation Implementation 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.