

February, 2016

Issue 13



**MONARCH  
JOINT VENTURE**



**MonarchNet News**  
A Citizen Science Newsletter

## Upcoming Events

- [Western Monarch Conservation Webinar](#), Feb 25, 2pm ET
- [Monarch Fest](#), San Antonio, TX, Mar 4-6
- [Aldo Leopold Weekend](#) at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Bloomington, MN, Mar 4-5



Photo: Gail Gilliland

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## Citizen Science Updates

### 2015 Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count Complete

- The Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count, an annual citizen science project that counts the size of the western overwintering population of monarchs, had completed another year of data collection. Around 100 volunteers surveyed 187 sites along the California coast. The 2015 population was slightly larger than in the last few years and included several new overwintering sites. Sites in the southern part of California, however, saw fewer monarchs than in recent years. You can learn more about the project and its findings on their [website](#).

### Citizen Science Day Announced

- The Citizen Science Association is coordinating a nationwide Citizen Science Day for April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Special events will be held at science centers, zoos, parks, and festivals across the country. You can find out how you can get involved by reading more [here](#).

### National Science Foundation Requests More Funding for Citizen Science

- The proposed fiscal year 2017 budget for the National Science Foundation, a major funder of scientific research across the country, includes funding for expanding the role of citizen science and crowdsourcing in the nation's scientific endeavors. The budget request still needs to be approved by Congress. You can read more about the budget request [here](#).

### Cascades Butterfly Project Receives Funding

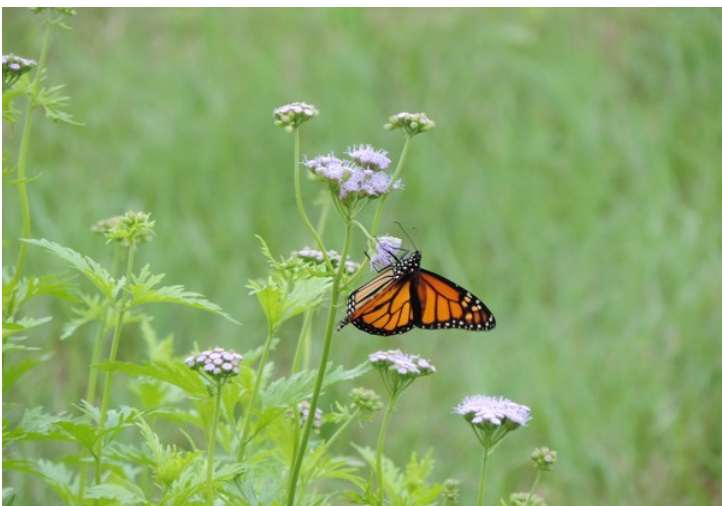
- The Washington's National Parks Fund (WNPF) is providing \$35,700 to fund the Cascades Butterfly Project, a citizen science project that monitors subalpine butterflies in North Cascades & Mount Rainier National Parks and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie & Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests. [The WNPF](#) is the official, non-profit partner that supports three national Parks in Washington: Mount Rainier National Park, North Cascades National Park Service Complex, and Olympic National Park. Each year, Superintendents of the three parks select five projects for which the WNPF raises funds. In 2015, North Cascades Superintendent Karen Taylor-Goodrich nominated the Cascades Butterfly Project (CBP) for fundraising. Funding will be used to hire two summer Biological Technicians to train and work with volunteers conducting weekly surveys. Survey sites are widely distributed and funding will also pay for vehicle rentals and supplies. In 2016, the project also was awarded funding for two college interns through the Mosaics in Science Program (National Park Service) and Geoscientists in Parks Diversity Program (Geologic Society of America and National Park Service). Both programs provide youth that are under-represented in natural resource science career fields with on-the-ground, science-based, work experience with the National Park Service. The CBP also has about 35 volunteers each year, and approximately 10 volunteers have been with the program for three or more years.

## *Gearing Up for the Spring Migration*

While citizen scientists in California can participate in the Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count, and volunteers along the Gulf of Mexico keep their eyes peeled for monarchs year-round, people throughout the rest of the country generally don't have many opportunities for monarch citizen science during the winter. But spring is almost here, and with it will come the monarch migration!

Whether you plan to report monarch sightings to Journey North, monitor milkweed for larvae with the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project, or participate in any other project, here are some steps you can take to prepare for the upcoming monarch season:

- **Review methods:** Even if you've been volunteering with a project for years, it never hurts to review your project's instructions and training materials. Some projects, like the MLMP, offer online trainings that you can use to quickly and easily refresh your memory.
- **Check for updates:** Sometimes projects make changes to their methods that require volunteers to collect different sorts of data or report it in a new way. Check your project's website, newsletters, or emails for any changes to the upcoming monarch season.
- **Track the migration:** Journey North's interactive map of monarch sightings makes it easy to follow the migration and predict when monarchs will arrive in your area.
- **Visit your site:** Where do you plan to collect data? Do you visit the same MLMP site week after week, or are you planning a butterfly count at a specific location? Make sure to visit your site in advance to ensure it's still a good location for data collection and that there have been no major changes to the area that will prevent you from using it (construction, storm damage, etc.)
- **Prepare your equipment and supplies:** What do you need to collect data? Some items, like pencils, rulers, and datasheets, are easy to come by. Others, like OE sampling kits for Monarch Health or a hand lens for MLMP, need to be obtained in advance.
- **Ask others to join you:** Many citizen scientists enjoy volunteering in groups. Ask your friends, family, and neighbors if they'd like to study monarchs with you. It will be fun, and you'll be able to cover more ground and collect more data!
- **Ask questions:** Confused about a new protocol? Can't remember how to submit your data? Check in with your project with any questions that you might have. It's better to get your questions answered beforehand than after the monarch season starts.



*Left: First generation monarch, Burnet, TX. Photo: Lori Greco*

*Right: Early milkweed field, QC. Photo: Vanessa Prefontaine*



What stories would you like to see in the MonarchNet News? Email us at [monarchs@monarchjointventure.org](mailto:monarchs@monarchjointventure.org).

## *Q&A with Monarch Joint Venture Science Coordinator Holly Holt*

Dr. Holly Holt recently joined the Monarch Joint Venture as our new Science Coordinator. Holly earned her PhD in Entomology from Pennsylvania State University in 2015, and prior to that she received her BS in General Biology from Cornell. She has experience with research in pollinator health, conservation outreach, and project management. We are excited to have Holly on our team and are confident that she'll be a great asset to the Monarch Joint Venture and to monarch conservation. We asked Holly to answer a few questions about citizen science, which is sure to play a role in her work.

*Q: Do you have any experience with citizen science, either as a participant or a practitioner?*

A: I do not have prior experience working with citizen science projects. However, I come from a honey bee background where professional and recreational beekeeper contributions directly advance knowledge and ensure that ongoing research supports applied needs identified from the field. At Penn State, I enjoyed participating in conferences and workshops for both academics and practitioners; it was a great opportunity to learn from individuals with decades of beekeeping experience and knowledge. At the same time, it was really rewarding for me to share the most recent scientific findings in my dissertation area and to teach specialized skills like identifying intestinal parasites so that beekeepers could screen their own colonies.



*Q: How do you feel about joining a field like monarch conservation, which is so heavily reliant on citizen science?*

A: As the Science Coordinator for the MJV, I'm excited to be working with national and international efforts to monitor monarch populations in conjunction with the MCSP (Monarch Conservation Science Partnership) and citizen science programs. Monitoring contributions from citizen science programs are and will continue to be fundamental to understanding monarch population dynamics through time and space.

*Q: As the MJV Science Coordinator, how do you see the role of citizen science in monarch conservation and in your job?*

A: The MCSP will be working with citizen science programs to integrate monitoring data collected by citizen scientists and biologists across different landscapes to create a more complete picture of migratory monarch population status and trends. It's both a pleasure and privilege to be working at the conjunction of public, federal, non-profit and academic efforts to conserve this amazing species!

### *We want to hear from you!*

Are you a butterfly citizen scientist with a story, photos, or artwork to share? Would you like to nominate a volunteer or program for recognition in the newsletter? Write to us at [monarchs@monarchjointventure.org](mailto:monarchs@monarchjointventure.org) with what you would like to see in the newsletter.

Help us spread the word. Send this newsletter to friends who may be interested, and encourage them to "Get Updates" under News & Events on the MJV website at [monarchjointventure.org/news-events/get-updates](http://monarchjointventure.org/news-events/get-updates).