

Monarch Butterfly

Danaus plexippus



Status: **Special Concern**

Threats:

- ◆ Logging and disturbance of overwintering sites in Mexico
- ◆ Use of herbicides and insecticides in Ontario
- ◆ Loss of larval food source (milkweed)



Description:

- ◆ Large, brightly-coloured butterfly with a 10 cm wingspan
- ◆ Wings are bright orange and have a thick black border with 2 rows of white spots
- ◆ Males have 2 highly visible black spots on their hind wings; the black bands on the wing veins of females are much wider than the males
- ◆ Larva are 5 cm long and brightly striped with yellow, black and white
- ◆ Pupa are jade and gold coloured

Biology:

- ◆ larva feed exclusively on the milkweed plant; toxins from the plant make the Monarch poisonous to predators
- ◆ Adults feed on the nectar of many flowers
- ◆ Females lay approximately 400 pin-sized eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves; will have 2-3 broods in one season
- ◆ Eggs hatch after 3-12 days depending on temperature
- ◆ Larval (caterpillar) stage lasts 2 weeks before transforming into the pupa; adult butterfly emerges a couple of weeks later

Habitat:

- ◆ Found wherever there are milkweed plants and a nectar source; common on abandoned farmland, roadsides, and urban gardens and parks
- ◆ Migrates to 1 of 12 sites in Mexico starting in early August to mid October; winter habitat is forested habitat at relatively high elevation

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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Monarch Butterfly on Your Property? *Here's What You Can Do:*

- ◆ **Protect and encourage native wildflower habitat on your property.** Allow milkweed to grow in at least a few locations on your property. Other flower species, such as goldenrod and asters, provide nectar for the adults.
- ◆ **Keep your lawn and garden healthy without the use of pesticides.**
- ◆ **Support sustainable agricultural practices.** Look for farms that have an Environmental Farm Plan.
- ◆ **Support sustainable forestry practices when you purchase wood products.** Look for an FSC logo.
- ◆ **Learn More.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.



Female

Photo: Kenneth Dwain Harrelson



Male

Photo: Derek Ramsey



Larva (Caterpillar)
Photo: USFWS



Pupa (Chrysalis)

Did You Know?

The Viceroy Butterfly looks very similar to the Monarch Butterfly.

While it was originally thought that Viceroy's mimicked Monarchs because Monarchs are toxic and predators have learned to avoid eating them, it is now known that Viceroy's also taste bad to predators!

By looking similar to each other, both species benefit and are avoided by predators.

Ontario's Endangered Species Act

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007* came into force on June 30, 2008, making Ontario a North American leader in the protection of species at risk and their habitats.

Compared to Ontario's previous Act, written in 1971, the new ESA 2007 provides:

- ◆ Science-based assessment of species' status
- ◆ Automatic protection of a species and its habitat once it's listed as endangered or threatened
- ◆ Broader protection for species at risk and their habitats
- ◆ Greater support for volunteer stewardship efforts of private landowners, resource users, and conservation organizations
- ◆ A commitment to recovery of species through recovery planning
- ◆ Greater accountability, including government reporting requirements

Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species, most of which have stable populations.

However, more than 180 species in Ontario, 34 of which are found in Parry Sound-Muskoka, are currently considered "at risk" because of threats like:

- ◆ Habitat loss
- ◆ Global changes in insect populations
- ◆ Pollution
- ◆ Invasive species
- ◆ Climate change
- ◆ Over-harvesting
- ◆ Road mortality



Learn more about Species at Risk on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.