

Monarch Workshop

Date: Tuesday, 8 May, 2012

Location: Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretive Centre

Present: Mary Ash, Merrill and Johanna Cutts, Don Davis, Sandy Garland, Peter Hall (Chair), Christine Hanrahan, Kate Harrigan, Joan Harvey, Jean Lauriault, Max Larrivée, Diane Lepage, Shelley MacWhirter, Jeremy Newman, Peter Rooney

1. FWG Monarch Waystation progress

Sandy provided an overview of the project: where the funding came from (Evergreen/Fido), how we came up with the idea for the largest monarch waystation in Canada, where we are at with the project at present. Diane mentioned the model monarch waystation in the butterfly meadow. One goal of the FWG project — determining the best time to cut milkweed to produce new growth when monarch larvae are developing — was discussed briefly.

2. Report on other Monarch Waystations in Ottawa

Johanna, a retired teacher, with the Monarch Teachers Network, reported on two waystations she manages. One is at her home, and one at Blossom Park Public School. She discussed the perennials they planted and how other butterflies are also attracted to the waystation site. In her experience, purple coneflower, New England aster, rudbeckia, and joe-pye weed, are all nectared extensively by monarchs. She has several species of milkweed in each waystation including lots of *Asclepias syriaca*. She mentioned butterfly bush (*Buddleia*) as being a real attractant, but difficult to overwinter, and they replant it most years (treat it as an annual?).

Shelley added that at her waystation in Kanata, zinnia is a very attractive plant for monarchs, as is bachelor's buttons. She too mentioned that *Buddleia* is a good shrub to plant but does not always survive our winters (it is marginal in this zone).

Kate noted that *Liatris* is an excellent plant for monarchs and that she is trying to grow a particular one (she didn't have the species name handy) that apparently is highly attractive to monarchs.

3. Butterfly reporting groups

Max discussed e-Butterfly, a newly created butterfly reporting website for Canada. It is aimed at both professional biologists and ordinary folk interested in butterflies. The aim is to create a database of observations that can be used for a variety of purposes, including tracking such phenomena as the recent red admiral/American lady migratory wave. Max said all records are verified by experts, and noted that photos help greatly in verifying observations. He also noted that he sees the future role of e-Butterfly as instrumental in education and conservation. Joan said it is possible that the Toronto Region Conservation Authority might be interested in

sponsoring e-Butterfly.

Peter H. talked about the local (mostly Ottawa region) butterfly group whose members report observations from around the area. It has about 40 members.

Don noted that the provincial butterfly group has 100 members who report observations from across the province.

Both of these groups, along with e-Butterfly, are a means of tracking butterfly occurrences and movements, as well as numbers.

Peter R. mentioned that the concept of Citizen Science is very important and we should involve the media.

4. Protected areas role

Discussion revolved around what some of the local landowners can do to help protect habitat for monarchs. The biggest landowner is the National Capital Commission (NCC), with whom it would be good to have regular contact via ongoing discussions about monarch (and other butterfly) habitat and its protection. One issue that came up several times was the unnecessary mowing of areas just at peak time for eggs and caterpillars.

The City of Ottawa was also mentioned because of the extensive mowing they do during critical times for monarchs. As well, the various regional conservation authorities should be brought into the discussions.

Max noted that roadside habitats are increasingly important, and in fact, have aided in range extension for many species by allowing them to penetrate further north into areas which previously would have been inhospitable (lack of suitable plants).

It was suggested that a meeting with the NCC, City of Ottawa and possibly those responsible for weed regulations (milkweed) would be beneficial for discussion of ways to minimize the impact of mowing on monarchs. As well, there are areas within the city where monarch habitat could be created or, where milkweeds are already present, maintained.

Kate suggested that all like-minded groups in the city should be working together (rather than continually reinventing the wheel).

5. Education

Joan discussed the Monarch Teachers Network-Canada, noting it came to Canada in 2003 and has since become a very active group that continues to grow. This year, the network will be holding workshops across Canada, including two in Ottawa (English and the first-ever French workshop). One of their goals, besides teaching children about monarchs, nature, conservation, is to try and get a butterfly garden/monarch waystation, in every school.

She suggested that there could be a mentoring process between gardeners and teachers, using the

FWG to get this off the ground locally.

She also talked about obtaining milkweeds for such gardens. Which species are available at nurseries, where else to get milkweeds. Some specialist nurseries in Ontario do grow and sell *Asclepias syriaca* as well as other milkweed species, but they are few and far between. Need a list of such places.

Don spoke about the need to partner with various businesses in order to get some services donated. He also spoke of the need to seek out funding sources, and the importance of finding good links with the media to publicize monarch-related issues.

Max said he is working on an entry system on eButterfly that kids can use; a database for schools on e-Butterfly.

6. Networking

Don had some good suggestions for networking with other monarch interest groups.

- MonarchWatch
- Dplex (listserv)
- Journey North
- Monarch Joint Venture

These are all US-based groups.

Peter H. suggested we should bring in Toronto Entomologists Association (TEA).

It was suggested that there should be a Canadian Monarch Network which would include TEA, all the monarch waystations, the Monarch Teachers Network, eButterfly, and other appropriate organizations. Links with the US groups would be forged too

Peter H. mentioned that a strategic plan to move forward on a network would help bring people together in a coordinated fashion.

Kate mentioned the Ottawa Botanical Garden proposal for the Central Experimental Farm – with a butterfly house one project.

7. Recommendations

- Develop a list of plants locally available (both native and not) for monarchs (and other butterflies). (FWG and the Monarch Teachers Network could share their lists).
- E-Butterfly to continue expanding and updating its capabilities, including an easily used entry system for kids (Max Larrivée)

- Bring together various local authorities, such as Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, the NCC, the City of Ottawa, to discuss how to protect and enhance habitat for monarchs (FWG Monarch Waystation Committee to take lead).
- Gardeners from FWG should attend the MTN workshops in Ottawa (FWG and MTN).
- Bring Canadian Wildlife Federation into the network (Diane Lepage).
- Increase the number of milkweeds locally (and also discuss Dog Strangling Vine and its control).
- Discuss hosting a public workshop on monarch conservation in the autumn (FWG and MTN to organize).
- FWG should consider growing more milkweed species as a public demonstration (FWG)
- Have a monarch waystation page on eButterfly (Max Larrivee).
- Promote networking on the issue of monarch butterflies in Quebec and ensure material available in French (Jean Lariault and Diane Lepage).
- Search out funding opportunities (e.g., Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (MTN to take lead)
- Develop a strategic Canadian Monarch Network working plan (Peter Hall).
- Establish a Canadian Monarch Network (all).
- Contact Ottawa Botanical Garden Ass'n. (Kate Harrington)