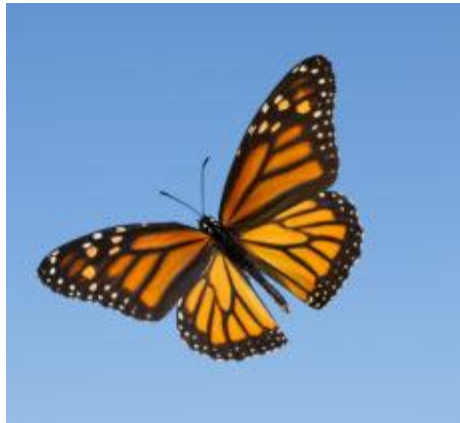


HOW CAN YOU HELP BUTTERFLIES?

Monarch butterflies migrate thousands of miles every year between Mexico and northeastern U.S. and Canada, traveling up to 20 miles per hour! Monarch butterflies are important because they help flowers and trees grow by assisting with pollination. Monarchs are an important part of a healthy ecosystem. As part of the food chain, butterflies are a tasty snack for birds and bats and play a role in flower pollination. Their presence or absence can tell us a lot about the local environment.



Monarch Butterfly

In Western Washington, we don't typically see Monarchs (they tend to be out in Eastern Washington). So the common solution to helping the monarchs, planting milkweed, is not advised where we live. There are plenty of other butterflies in this area and they play a number of roles in the ecosystem. They act as pollinators and as a food source for other species, acting as an important connector in a thriving ecosystem web.

Unfortunately, butterfly populations are also at risk due to environmental pressures like drought and habitat loss. But we can all take small actions that will help ensure butterfly survival. Below are a few ideas:

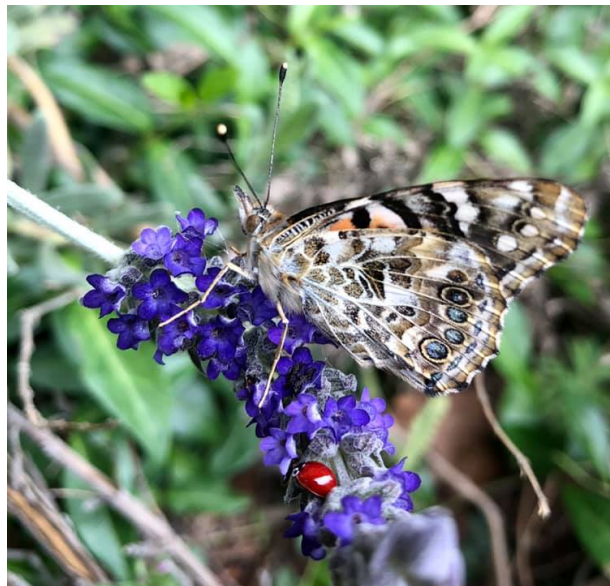
IDEA 1: Buy organic produce and avoid genetically engineered foods as much as possible. Pesticides and insecticides kill the plants that butterflies depend on for food. Genetically engineered foods are resistant to pesticides, requiring farmers to apply much more pesticide to their crops.

IDEA 2: Participate in Citizen Science, which is scientific research conducted by amateur scientists or citizens just like you. People all over the world volunteer their time to observe and collect data on a multitude of projects. Check out this link for information on how citizen science has helped monarchs:

www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/Monarch_Butterfly/citizenscience/index.shtml.

With recent technology, it is very easy to perform citizen science. E-butterfly is a website that allows you to track your observations of butterflies and your tracking can help scientists monitor butterfly populations. You can also learn about different types of butterflies. Check it out here: <http://www.e-butterfly.org/>.

IDEA 3: Create butterfly habitat in your yard. Butterflies need three things to thrive: food, water, and a safe space to lay eggs. All butterflies have a special host plant, where they deposit their eggs and on which the caterpillars will feed. For monarch butterflies, that plant is milkweed, and it's easy to grow. A common butterfly around TreeSong is the Painted Lady Butterfly, which lay their eggs on thistle, mallows, hollyhock, and legumes. The Painted Lady feeds on nectar from the flowers of thistles, red clover, asters, and many other plants.



Painted Lady Butterfly

IDEA 4: Learn about endangered butterflies in your area. Many people immediately think of monarch butterflies being threatened but there are other butterflies being threatened across the country. There is one butterfly in SW Washington/NW Oregon that is near extinction: the Taylor's Checkerspot.



Taylor's Checkerspot

The Taylor's Checkerspot has historically been found in grasslands through Western Washington and Western Oregon. But today, there are only 8 known populations in Washington and 2 in Oregon. This butterfly was listed as endangered in 2006 in the state of Washington. The reason for the decline of these populations is due to the decline in their habitats of prairie-oak ecosystems (similar to the area around Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge). These ecosystems have been overrun by invasive species or developed. So how can you help? Consider participating in habitat restorations at places like Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge in Washington, reduce your pesticide use, plant native plants in your yards, and learn more about these endangered butterflies. Here are some links to get you started:

<https://www.wweek.com/news/2019/03/09/the-oregon-zoo-plans-to-release-a-record-number-of-endangered-butterflies-into-the-wild-this-month/>

<https://www.fws.gov/wafwo/articles.cfm?id=149489655>

<https://www.oregonzoo.org/conservation/fighting-extinction-pacific-northwest/taylors-checkerspot-butterfly>

<http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/spp-programs-in-wa/conservation/taylors-checkerspot-butterfly-program-2/>

Sources:

<https://baynature.org/artice/plant-milkweed-save-monarchs/>

<https://www.butterfliesathome.com/painted-lady-butterfly.htm>

<https://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/articles.cfm?id=149489449>

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/euphydryas-editha-taylori>

<https://globalguardianproject.teachable.com/blog/91188/protecting-butterflies>