



Tales from a  
**Sisters Naturalist**  
by Jim Anderson

**Making monarch conservation happen**

In this day and age of wrangling in just about all areas of U.S. Government — especially the continual bickering in Congress — what a refreshing day a group of monarch conservationists had recently while visiting a cooperative nursery in Wasco County.

Who'd think, right behind the historical Clarno Grange, on the west side of the bridge over the John Day River you'd find a wonderful area of river-front acreage dedicated to not only monarch butterfly habitat, but to cultivating willows and cottonwoods for habitat reconstruction along the entire stretch of the river and other locations.

Monarch butterflies have suffered over 90 percent population loss since the 1990s — dropping from billions to millions. What a lot of people may not know is that there are monarchs breeding right here in Sisters Country! In fact, Central Oregon is a critical area for monarchs in the western flyway, migrating through here in summer and fall on their way to and from the breeding areas in Canada, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona and Nevada.

President Obama threw his hat into the monarch restoration efforts by mandating the first pot of federal money earmarking \$3.2 million for rescuing pollinators, and establishing monarch waystations along the I-35 corridor, which extends from Mexico to Minnesota — and follows a main route for the annual eastern monarch

butterfly migration.

About \$2 million of the federal budget will go toward conservation programs, while the balance will seed the Monarch Conservation Fund that will be administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, whose role will be to solicit donations to match the U.S. Fish & Wildlife funding.

Lincoln Brower's petition to list the monarch as an endangered species — which is under a mandatory year-long review by the Fish and Wildlife Service — gives the assessment that the monarch "is a biological system falling apart along its seams."

Just recently, the agrochemical giant Monsanto pledged \$4 million to monarch-saving efforts, most of it going to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. However, Brower feels it would be far better if they'd just stop manufacturing "Roundup," one of the worst factors in the plight of the monarch's vanishing status.

USFW will also work with the nonprofit National Wildlife Federation to further its monarch project by making public land, facilities, and staff available when appropriate.

The Clarno nursery is a perfect example of how the federal government has jumped into habitat conservation; it doesn't profit hunters, anglers, sportsmen, ranchers or any of the so-called "users"; it's just plain, good old, ecosystem restoration for butterflies and fish. Who'da think it!

"We're happy to see you here," said Chris Jensen, head of silviculture operations for the USFS, to a recent group of monarch preservationists from Bend, under the leadership of MACO.

MACO, aka Monarch Advocates of Central Oregon, is a citizen advocacy group dedicated to helping monarch butterflies by planting native milkweed waystations and educating the community about native pollinators. The outfit is comprised of natural resource professionals,

master gardeners, nonprofit professionals, and passionate citizens with diverse skills and experience. In July 2015, MACO was awarded a grant by Awesome Bend to help create milkweed waystations in nine community gardens in Bend, and to educate the public about how to help monarch butterflies and pollinators. Look for MACO on Facebook.

"While we're looking over the milkweed plantation please keep an eye out for adult monarchs," Jensen said. "If you see any we'll capture, tag them and release them back into the milkweed. These may be adults on their journey back north, and we'd like to know where their next stop is."

In spring monarchs appear en-route to their northern destinations where they spend summer. (It sometimes takes five generations for the species to make it from wintering to summering haunts). It's the spring trip when milkweed plays a vital role in producing butterflies that will continue their trek to the monarch's final summer haunts.

Because milkweed is the only plant on which monarch larvae feed, one easy way to help monarchs is by adding milkweed to existing pollinator gardens — creating "waystations" for monarchs to stop for food, water, shelter, and breeding habitat along their migration north.

Waystations that feature our native, locally adapted showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) can also help other pollinating species. In fact,



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Sue Anderson, local butterfly expert, shows how to tag a Monarch butterfly.

showy milkweed supports over 40 native pollinator species; it's easy to grow, and is a beautiful addition to any garden.

An adult male monarch was captured at the nursery, and while Sue Anderson was placing a numbered tag on it — issued by Dr. David James from Washington State University — she took the time to show the participants the small marks on the hind wing of the male monarch that the female does not possess.

Because of his workload, Jensen can only get to the Clarno nursery once a week, and asked the group if they could create a schedule among themselves that would have people come over through the week to monitor the monarchs that show up, and see that the larva are protected from voracious paper wasps.

In addition to the government nursery there are several other wild milkweed stands downriver of

the nursery. After spending enough time to check for adults — one which was found and tagged — the group spent another few hours exploring other areas along the river for milkweed and monarchs.

On that trip Jensen explained to the group how the Bureau of Land Management is helping with the finances with their black cottonwood and willow plantings, and how USFW also assists in keeping the nursery going.

The Clarno nursery and monarch waystations are crucial to saving the iconic monarch butterfly because weed eradication efforts, along with the loss of prairies, have destroyed milkweed plants. (In Iowa, local milkweed has been placed on the threatened species list.)

If you and/or your friends want to take part in this ongoing monarch restoration project at Clarno, contact Katya Spiecker through her MACO Facebook account.

**WELCOME Pastor Brandon**  
and wife of 10 years, Holly,  
sons Isaiah (4), Damon (2),  
and Wesley (1).



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