

Monarch Madness event turns out to be more like Monarch Sadness

Long Point Basin Land Trust holds Monarch tagging event for science and conservation of the species

(Port Rowan, Ontario.) On a hot sunny Saturday September 16th, Long Point Basin Land Trust held their second annual Monarch Madness event at the Shirley and George Pond Nature Reserve, near St. Williams, Ontario. The 80-acre Pond Nature Reserve was a retired orchard that has been restored to natural landscapes such as meadows, Carolinian forest and a cold water stream that flows into Turkey Point Marsh.

Local butterfly enthusiast Kathryn Boothby lead 2 workshops where participants learned about the biology of the Monarch species including their food plants, the importance of fueling stops on their big fall migration, and why tagging the butterflies is important to the conservation of the species. A total of 6 Monarch butterflies were carefully caught and 5 were tagged. The organizers of the Monarch Madness event had expected many more butterflies but attributed the “monarch sadness” to the summer-like weather. “Who wants to fly south when the weather is so nice here?” said Lyndsay Shular, Stewardship Coordinator for the land trust. The important data collected from Saturday’s event will be sent to MonarchWatch; an education, conservation, and research program from the University of Kansas.

Participants watched and listened while Kathryn explained that Monarch butterflies cannot survive the cold winter temperatures of Canada so they migrate south – all the way to Mexico! She spoke about the journey of the “super-generation” of Monarchs that leave us in the late summer and why providing the butterflies with food sources, or “waystations” as Boothby called them, are crucial to the survival of Monarchs along their journey. Planting different species of milkweed and high-nectar flowers such as Butterfly Bush or Joe Pye-weed can help fuel the butterflies for their continued journey. Once the butterflies arrive to their over-wintering destination in the mountains of Mexico, they breed and hang out in the fir trees for the winter months. Each spring, butterflies that have died and fallen to the forest floor are collected by locals. Collected specimens with tags provide an income source and encourages conservation and protection of the wintering habitat.

Other butterfly species observed throughout the day include Spicebush Swallowtail, Viceroy, Eastern Tailed Blue, Eastern Coma, Red Admiral, Orange Sulphur, and Common Buckeye. Special thanks to Kathryn Boothby for leading the two workshops on Saturday. To learn more about Monarch Watch and their research visit www.monarchwatch.org. For more information on events and the Long Point Basin Land Trust, visit www.longpointlandtrust.ca.



Figure 2 Kathryn Boothby explaining the process of carefully tagging a Monarch butterfly. Photo by Lyndsay Shular



Figure 1 A Monarch caterpillar feeding on the leaves of a milkweed plant. Photo by Peter Carson