

Continental plan to protect the monarch's migratory journey

June 28 2008

Canada, Mexico and the United States are joining forces to protect and conserve the Monarch butterfly, which has become a symbol of North America's shared environment.

Although the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is not in danger of extinction, its unique multigenerational migration spanning the continent is considered an endangered biological phenomenon due to threats to the monarch's habitats throughout the flyway. Because monarchs depend upon a wide range of habitats in Canada, Mexico and the United States, conservation of the migratory phenomenon requires trilateral cooperation.

The North American Monarch Conservation Plan, announced this week by the environment ministers of the three countries, outlines concerted actions to be taken in each country.

Last year, the ministers instructed the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) to build upon existing monarch conservation work by developing a North American plan aimed at maintaining healthy monarch populations and habitats throughout the migratory flyway, while promoting sustainable local livelihoods in the wintering grounds.

In response, the CEC worked with local communities and stakeholders, as well as conservation officials and agencies across the region to advance trilateral work, including a Monarch Butterfly Sister Protected Area Network.

The plan outlines a long-term collaborative agenda with nearly 60 specific actions that seek to:

- rease or eliminate deforestation in the overwintering habitat in south-central Mexico and California;
- address threats of habitat loss and degradation along the monarch's migratory routes;
- address threats of loss, fragmentation and modification of breeding habitat;
- develop innovative ways to promote sustainable livelihoods for people in and around key monarch habitats; and
- monitor monarch populations across North America.

The annual migration of millions of monarchs across North America is among the world's most spectacular natural events. The monarch conservation plan, in addition to the actions it outlines, provides a detailed overview of the monarch's migratory patterns, lifecycle and its current status.

The plan also identifies the main threats to the monarch set in the context of current management actions taken in each country, as well as public perception of the species.

Source: Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Citation: Continental plan to protect the monarch's migratory journey (2008, June 28) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-06-continental-monarch-migratory-journey.html>

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