

Climate change disrupting monarch butterfly migration

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.10.20

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Image 1. Every year, millions of monarch butterflies migrate to the same remote stretch of forest in central Mexico, an event scientists have long thought of as a great wonder of the insect world. Now, however, the migration and the species itself are under threat from climate change. Photo: Kevin Sieff/Washington Post Photo: Kevin Sieff/Washington Post

Monarch butterflies are one of the oldest animals in the world. Each year they travel. They spend the summer in North America. Then they fly to Mexico. They stay there for the winter. The butterflies have made the trip for hundreds of years.

Now the butterfly is in danger. They may die out because of climate change.

The butterflies can only live in certain climates. Now the weather is harder to foresee. There are more winter storms. There are also more heat waves. The plant milkweed is drying up. Monarch caterpillars need milkweed. It is their food.

Karen Oberhauser studies monarch butterflies. She does not know if the butterfly can handle climate change. Scientists think it might not survive.

A Billion Butterflies Have Vanished

Using gas and oil makes the planet warmer. Then, weather patterns change. The result is climate change.

The butterflies all travel together. They spend winter in the Mexican forest. Each area is small. The patch is smaller than half a football field. A single storm could kill off all the butterflies. Between 1990 and 2015, a billion butterflies vanished.

Chip Taylor is a professor. He started Monarch Watch. The group studies and tries to save the butterflies. He thinks soon the monarchs could die out.

Almost all the butterflies winter in Mexico. The colonies are one of the great wonders of the world. Thousands of butterflies live in the trees. They look like glittering orange clouds.

Climate Change Is The Main Problem

The United Nations studies worldwide problems. It said 1 million plants and animals might die out soon. The monarch is one of them. The main reason is climate change.

Rosario is a town in Mexico. The people there love the butterflies. The monarchs have landed there for hundreds of years.

"Our grandparents told us, 'Take care of them. They're angels,'" said Homero Gomez González. He was once a leader of Rosario.

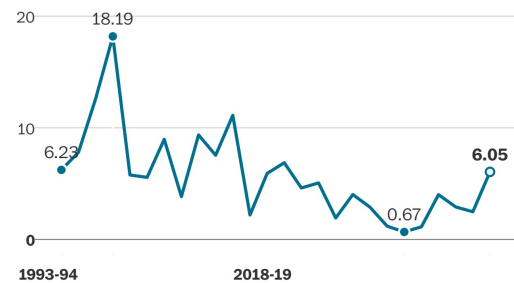
Scientists do not know why the butterflies return. They do not know why the insects pick the same hills.

Some humans are trying to help. But small changes may not do much. Mr. Taylor said we must solve climate change. Otherwise the butterflies will disappear.



An increasingly precarious journey

The annual migration of the monarch butterfly from North America to Mexico is erratic but has generally declined.



Numbers show hectares occupied by monarch butterfly colonies.

Source: Mexican Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources, National Commission of Protected Natural Areas, Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, World Wildlife Fund

Quiz

- 1 What is the section "Climate Change Is The Main Problem" MAINLY about?
- (A) why people should help monarch butterflies
 - (B) where monarch butterflies mostly live
 - (C) who likes to watch monarch butterflies
 - (D) when monarch butterflies go to Mexico

- 2 What is the article MAINLY about?
- (A) climate change
 - (B) towns in Mexico
 - (C) summer weather
 - (D) butterflies in trouble

- 3 Read the sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4].

Scientists think it might not survive.

What does the word "survive" mean?

- (A) hide
- (B) appear
- (C) live
- (D) stop

- 4 Read the sentence from the section "A Billion Butterflies Have Vanished."

The colonies are one of the great wonders of the world.

What does the author mean by the phrase "great wonders of the world"?

- (A) Monarch butterflies are hard to find.
- (B) Monarch butterflies are amazing.
- (C) Monarch butterflies are in danger.
- (D) Monarch butterflies are not real.