



EMERALD KEEPERS

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For an Emerald Green, Ocean Blue Coronado

MIGRATING MONARCHS

DISTINCTIVE BUTTERFLIES MAKE WINTER HOME IN REGION

Monarch butterflies have arrived in San Diego as part of their seasonal migration from northern states west of the Rockies. Western monarchs typically arrive in California in late fall and stay through early February.

These monarchs do not migrate to Central Mexico. The monarchs east of the Rockies travel 3,000 miles between southeastern Canada and Mexico. The western monarch typically travels 1,500 miles to winter anywhere between San Francisco and San Diego. Many land in central California.

San Diego also has resident monarch butterflies that do not migrate, living in the area year-round.

IDENTIFICATION

Western monarchs can be found in local gardens and parks during the winter months. The butterfly is recognizable its vibrant orange and black wings. Monarch caterpillars are distinctive bodies with yellow, white, and black stripes and a pair of black tentacles on both ends.

DECLINING POPULATION

Climate change, pesticide use, and habitat loss have led to devastating declines in the migratory monarch population. In the 1990s, millions of

monarchs visited California every winter. In 2020, less than 3,000 monarchs were counted. In 2022, numbers rebounded to more than 250,000, but that number is still low for the monarch's long-term survival. The next count, in January 2024, will provide important information on the population.

Due to the declining population and increased human threats, the migratory monarch butterfly has been classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

HELP PROTECT MONARCHS

Coronado can create a refuge for migrating monarchs by planting native milkweed — the sole food source for monarch caterpillars — and creating butterfly-friendly, pesticide-free gardens.

Migrating monarch butterflies depend on native milkweed as a place to lay eggs and as a food source for emerging larva. Milkweed contains specific alkaloids that make monarchs bitter to predators helping the young survive. Be sure to plant one of the five native milkweeds (narrow leaf milkweed, Indian milkweed, California milkweed, rush milkweed and desert milkweed) that

are drought tolerant and acclimated to our local climate. Milkweed plants can grow in pots or in the ground and require regular maintenance and care.

Be sure to plant only native milkweed.



Tropical milkweed is widely available and will attract monarchs, but it can hurt the butterfly population. Because it doesn't die back in winter, tropical milkweed can harbor a protozoan parasite called *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*, or OE for short, which harms monarchs. And because tropical milkweed grows later in the year, it can disrupt the migration cycle. Recent studies also suggest that the alkaloid monarchs need in milkweed can become too concentrated for them in the tropical varieties.

Traditional butterfly-friendly plants such as butterfly bush, cosmos, lantana and native sages are also beneficial nectar sources for adult monarchs.

The spectacular migrating monarch butterfly needs Coronado to be Emerald Green, Ocean Blue to help ensure its survival.



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