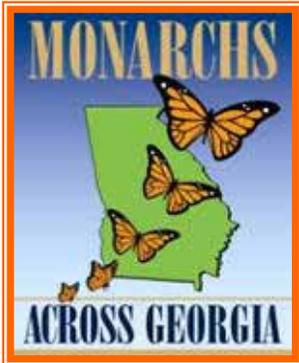


# Monarchs Across Georgia Newsletter

Spring, 2006  
Volume 2, Issue 1

A Committee of the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia  
[www.eealliance.org](http://www.eealliance.org)



## There's No Need to Release Butterflies -- They're Already Free

*Reprinted by permission [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org) by Jeffrey Glassberg (president of NABA); Paul Opler (author of Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Butterflies); Robert M. Pyle (author of Audubon Society Field Guide to Butterflies); Robert Robbins (curator of Lepidoptera, Smithsonian Institution) and James Tuttle (president, Lepidopterists' Society)*

of live butterflies is the dark side of this increase in popularity. Although this practice is understandable to naive newlyweds-to-be (what could be more beautiful than adding butterflies to the environment?) it is really a particularly long-lasting form of environmental pollution.

### Upcoming Events

#### ▪ June 22

Monarchs Across Georgia Workshop, Funk Heritage Center, Waleska. Visit [www.gaconservancy.org](http://www.gaconservancy.org) for more information/register.

#### ▪ July 4

North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Count 2006. Visit [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org) for more information.

#### ▪ September 1

Journey South migration tracking begins. Visit [www.learner.org/jnorth](http://www.learner.org/jnorth)

#### ▪ October 27

Outdoor Classroom Symposium, Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center, Mansfield. Visit [www.eealliance.org](http://www.eealliance.org) for more information.

### Our Mission

To engage schools and families in learning experiences involving monarchs and other native butterflies. The MAG program promotes stewardship of the natural environment through multi-disciplinary exploration and scientific investigation.

Most fifth graders can tell you how the magnificent Monarch butterflies migrate thousands of miles every autumn from the United States and Canada to a few small mountain tops in Mexico. There they find the right environmental conditions that allow them to survive the winter. With the advent of spring, they begin their return journey. This migratory phenomenon is truly a wonder of nature that sparks the imagination.

Now imagine tens of thousands of mixed-up Monarchs unable to find the way to their overwintering grounds. This depressing image may become a reality if the rapidly growing fad of releasing butterflies, including Monarch butterflies, at weddings, state fairs, and other public events continues to spread. Because the released Monarchs may have come from California, for instance, where they do not migrate to Mexico, their offspring may not be able to orient properly. Because the Monarchs were raised inside under unnatural conditions, it is possible that their delicate migratory physiology may not have been turned on.

Public interest in butterflies is increasing dramatically. We hope and expect this greater involvement with butterflies will eventually lead to much-needed support for butterfly conservation and studies, but the release

- Butterflies raised by unregulated commercial interests may spread diseases and parasites to wild populations, with devastating results.
- Often, butterflies are released great distances from their points of origin, resulting in inappropriate genetic mixing of different populations when the same species is locally present. When it is not, a non-native species is being introduced in the area of release. At best, this confuses studies of butterfly distribution and migration; at worst, it may result in deleterious changes to the local ecology. The Hollywood Jurassic park message, "Don't fool with Mother Nature," has scientific foundations. Recently a high profile report in Science magazine found that even the careful introduction of species for biological control often causes unexpected negative results.
- In addition, these releases create a commercial market for live butterflies (currently about \$10/apiece), with the result that, for example, the Monarch overwintering sites in Mexico and on the California coast are now targets for poachers.

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Currently, the interstate shipment of live butterflies requires a permit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture but this law is not usually enforced. In general, the Dept. of Agriculture may issue a permit for shipping any of the following species: Monarch, Painted Lady, American Lady, Red Admiral, Giant Swallowtail, Gulf Fritillary, Zebra (Heliconian), and Mourning Cloak.

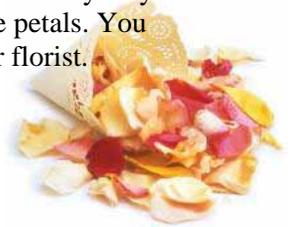
Shipping Red Admirals, Giant Swallowtails, Gulf Fritillaries and Zebra (Heliconians) is particularly inappropriate because they are not naturally found over much of the United States.

A solution that better serves the public interest with less regulatory burden is to ban the environmental release of commercially-obtained butterflies (we would exempt education

institutions although even here we would encourage schools to keep commercially- obtained butterflies within the confines of the school).

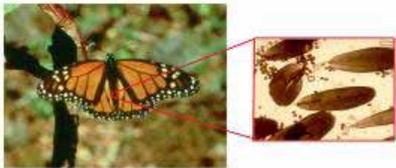
The intentional release of native birds was outlawed in 1947. The time has come to do the same with butterflies. In addition to the above, many wedding planners now avoid butterflies at weddings because they not infrequently arrive dead, or half-dead. Even if alive, they often will soon die because they are released at the wrong time of year, or at the wrong locality to survive.

A truly beautiful and environmentally friendly way to celebrate a wedding is to throw rose petals. You can even use outdated roses from your florist.



## UGA's *Project MonarchHealth* Needs Your Help!

Project MonarchHealth is a survey by volunteer citizen scientists of the occurrence of the protozoan parasite *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE), which parasitizes monarch butterflies. Best known for their migrations between breeding and wintering sites throughout North America, these butterflies are also found in non-migratory populations in places such as southern Florida.



This parasite is not harmful to humans; however, it can harm the butterflies by inhibiting normal growth and lowering butterfly survival in the wild. To check for parasites, surveyors can swab the abdomen of live butterflies to collect parasite spores.

### Who Can Participate?

Anyone interested in monarch butterflies can participate. Monarch Health is conducted by people of all skills, ages, and backgrounds including families, retired persons, classrooms, monarch organizations, nature centers, and individuals.

### Does It Cost Money?

No! You will be sent a kit of supplies necessary in this sampling process.

### What Exactly Will I Do As a Participant?

The most essential activity is capturing and sampling wild monarchs. Either capture monarch butterflies as

adults or raise the caterpillars in separate containers until they become adult butterflies. In either case, you will gently swab each butterfly's abdomen with a Q-tip to collect the OE spores. Next, you will send the sample, along with a simple data sheet for each butterfly, back to the scientists where they will analyze the sample. After the data are compiled, we will send you the results of your sampling contribution as well as post them on an Internet database for the public to see.

### Why Should I Participate?

MonarchHealth will help scientists learn more about disease spread in migratory butterfly populations. The sampling results from citizen scientists will be posted in scientific journals and shared with other scientists and monarch enthusiasts nationwide. As a surveyor, you will learn more about monarch butterflies and the parasite, OE. If you raise the caterpillars, you will be able to watch them transform from hungry caterpillars into magnificent butterflies (this part is especially great for children!). Your efforts will contribute to understanding the Biology of monarchs, and also the broader world of science.

### How Do I Get Started?

Contact the UGA lab for a free rearing kit and instructions by emailing [monarch@uga.edu](mailto:monarch@uga.edu) or by calling (706) 542-3485. Ask about getting materials for the new citizen science project, MonarchHealth.

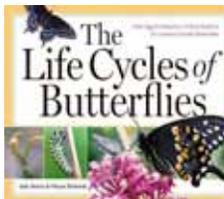
For more information visit [www.monarchparasites.org](http://www.monarchparasites.org) or download the informational brochure at [www.monarchsacrossga.org](http://www.monarchsacrossga.org).

## Monarch and Other Butterfly Resources

### Best Garden Plants for Georgia ISBN: 976820009X



Author Tara Dillard packs this handy guide packed with the best plant varieties you'll want for your garden. Includes information on: habitat, height and spread; plant features and flower colors; soil, light and water; and tips on best use of the plant in your garden.



### The Life Cycles of Butterflies: From Egg to Maturity, a Visual Guide to 23 Common Garden Butterflies ISBN: 1580176186

Authors Judy Burris and Wayne Richards tell how they created the ultimate butterfly havens in their own backyards, planting every kind of caterpillar host plant and nectar-producing flower imaginable.

## Grants

For an extensive list of grant opportunities, for not only butterflies gardens, but also outdoor classrooms and community gardens please visit the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia web page at [http://www.eealliance.org/occ%20symposium/grant\\_resources.htm](http://www.eealliance.org/occ%20symposium/grant_resources.htm). Also, included is a link to a tutorial on how to write successful grant applications.

## KidsGardening.com

KidsGardening is a part of the National Gardening Association ([www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)). Their programs highlight the opportunities for plant-based education in schools, communities, and backyards across the country. For a better understanding of how flowers attract pollinators read "Flower Courtship: Alluring Advertisers" <http://www.kidsgardening.com/Dig/DigDetail.taf?ID=1115&Type=Art>. It ties in with our pollinator garden certification.

## Is Your Butterfly Garden MAG Certified? *The Pollinator Habitat Certification Program*

### *What, How, and Why?*

Do you enjoy watching and studying caterpillars on their host plants; searching for chrysalides hidden from predators; observing butterflies and hummingbirds flitting from flower to flower? Does your schoolyard or backyard have bushes, trees, and flowers that provide host plants, nectar, and protection for butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, and other pollinators? Is there a source of water/puddling areas for thirsty butterflies? Are there places for them to roost at night? Then you might want to look into registering your backyard/schoolyard habitat with *Monarchs Across Georgia's Pollinator Habitat Program*.

### *What Do You Need to Provide?*

- *Water* is essential for life, and your winged friends are no exception. A shallow pan of water or a puddling area is much appreciated.
- *Food* is critical for the growth and development of the caterpillars and also provides energy for the adult butterfly, bees, and hummingbirds.
- *Shelter or cover* to hide from predators, a place to nestle down at night, or a place to regulate their body temperatures.
- *Earth-friendly gardening* with the avoidance of chemical pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides, along with a naturalized habitat.

### *Certifying is Easy!*

Whether you are limited to a small patio or have an acre of land, Monarchs Across Georgia would like to acknowledge your efforts in welcoming not only butterflies, but also other pollinators to your garden. The *Pollinator Habitat Certification Program* was initiated to recognize the hard work of Georgians in meeting the habitat needs of pollinators.



To download the application visit [www.monarchsacrossga.org](http://www.monarchsacrossga.org). Receive the certification, certificate, and the beautiful metal sign for your garden for \$38.00 or just the certification and certificate for \$10.00.

## Wings of Wonder Butterfly Identification Contest

Visit the Monarchs Across Georgia website to see if you can correctly identify the "*Wings of Wonder*" butterfly. The first person to respond correctly with its name will receive our Monarchs Across Georgia "got milkweed?" bumper sticker.



We're on the Web!  
www.monarchsacrossga.org

### Contact Us

Please feel free to forward this issue to friends and associates. Anyone can subscribe to this free quarterly newsletter by emailing:  
[kgarland@gaconservancy.org](mailto:kgarland@gaconservancy.org)

To unsubscribe type "Unsubscribe MAG Newsletter" in the subject line.

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✂ Each issue will spotlight a butterfly found in Georgia. Cut along this line to create your own Georgia butterfly field guide.

Egg



Caterpillar



Pupa



### COMMON BUCKEYE (*Junonia coenia*)

#### Fast Facts

- Adult wingspan is 1.5 – 2.7 inches (4.2 - 7 CM).
- The underside of the wing looks very different with it being brown or tan in the wet season (summer) and rose-red in the dry season (fall).
- Host plants: snapdragon, toadflax, plantain, figwort, stonecrop, and vervain.
- Preferred habitat includes open, sunny areas with low vegetation and some bare ground.
- The eyespots on the wings may be used to scare away predators.
- There are usually two or three generations born each breeding season.
- In the autumn along the east coast, there are impressive southward emigrations. In places such as Cape May, New Jersey, the October hordes of buckeyes drifting southward rival those of monarchs in number and spectacle.

Notes:

Adult

