



**CONSERVATION.**

**EDUCATION.**

**ADVOCACY.**

**MONARCH TAGGING EVENT** – A hands-on environmental education program focused on the unique life-cycle and migration of the Monarch Butterfly.

### What is a Monarch Tagging Event?

The Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF) routinely hosts Monarch Tagging events as a tool to educate both youth and adults about the unique, fragile and wondrous life cycle of the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). At these events, we train learners to gently capture monarch butterflies in butterfly nets and affix a small numbered sticker to the hindwing.



These events can happen at any outdoor location where monarchs are routinely present. Stickers and datasheets are ordered through the international monarch monitoring program called Monarch Watch. ([www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org))

### Why do we Tag Monarchs?

Monarchs spend all spring and summer migrating north from Mexico to Canada. Since most butterflies have short lives (+4 weeks), it usually takes about 3-4 generations of monarch butterflies several months to reach their northerly destination. There is a final migration back to Mexico that happens annually from September through November. This final generation of monarch is called the "Super Generation" because it lives up to 8 months.

The Super Generation is important to monarch tagging as they will make the entire migratory trip back to Mexico. By affixing a small numbered sticker to these butterflies--the data from these recaptures is then used to determine the pathways taken by migrating monarchs, the influence of weather on the migration, the survival rate of the monarchs.



Tagging events transpire mostly during the months of September and October to ensure that we are tagging the super generation.

Utilizing tag information from recovered butterflies (dead/alive) can give researchers a lot of important information on that specific butterfly's flight route and origin.

Participating in a monarch tagging event helps everyday citizens take an active role in monarch conservation efforts and learn more about the fascinating monarch life cycle.

### Does tagging hurt the butterfly?

If done properly the process of capturing, tagging and releasing the butterfly does not cause any harm to the monarch. Monarch butterflies, despite their fragile appearance, can be captured in nets and handled without receiving any damage. To ensure that they are safely handled, we have trained volunteers and staff assigned specifically to the task of removing the butterfly from nets and affixing the sticker.



With assistance from a trained adult volunteer, children are able to affix the sticker to the butterfly themselves!

These events contribute highly valuable data and research to international monarch recovery studies!



## **Milkweed Distribution Event / Giveaway**

### **Why is milkweed important?**

Milkweed is the only larval host plant for the monarch butterfly. This means that monarch larva (caterpillar) is only able to eat from this plant. There is no other food source for this caterpillar which means—no milkweed, no monarchs!

### **Milkweed Distribution**

Since milkweed is difficult to buy at most retail growers, IWF orders flats of individual milkweed plants in small,

separate pots called “plugs”. Plugs can be distributed individually to attendees or in small native plant kits with other beneficial pollinator plants like purple coneflower, black eyed-susans or dense blazing star. This action of distributing pollinator-friendly plants to Hoosiers across the state is effectively adding small pockets of pollinator habitat that act as “filling stations” for monarchs as they traverse the nation.

**Monarch Photo Booth** – IWF has additionally created a fun and engaging way to use social media to spread the word about monarch education. Using a backdrop that features an enlarged photo of a monarch caterpillar feasting on the native common milkweed plant, a necessity for its survival, we have created a number of monarch-themed props to transform you into a caterpillar or butterfly. Photos can be shared with a hashtag to promote the event attendance.



**Monarch Tagging Events paired with a Milkweed Distribution** is an excellent community day or a great fit for a school event. Events can begin with training and workshops on monarch biology, and end with a milkweed giveaway to tie all the education and research components together in an educational package complete with a take-home message. The Indiana Wildlife Federation strives to tie environmental education information to a take-home message that can be amplified and implemented through basic daily actions.