



Photo credit Christine Beck

San Diego Pollinator Alliance

- Fall 2021 Newsletter -



For our Fall issue, we are excited to share news of monarch overwintering activity, provide some opportunities for you to practice community science, connect you to sources for native plants and more!

Great News from Monarch Overwintering Sites!

We are elated to share news from the Xerces Society as the reports from Western monarch overwintering sites start to roll in. For those who are not familiar with the term, overwintering is the act of migrating to warmer regions to survive the winter. Eastern monarchs overwinter in Mexico and Western monarchs overwinter along the California coast. Last year, the overwintering Western monarch population had decreased to just 1% of its historic numbers, an all time low that reinforced the plight of these essential pollinators. However, as we start to see monarchs arrive to some coastal sites, there is cause for celebration!

Pacific Grove:

2021 - 1,300+ monarchs | 2020 - 0

Pismo State Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove and adjacent site:

2021 - 8,000 monarchs | 2020 - less than 300

Many factors can affect the number of butterflies that overwinter each season, such as climate and access to food. While we are happy to see an increase in counts this year, we must still be mindful that these beautiful creatures need to be protected.

The Xerces Society has put together a Western Monarch Call to Action, that consists of 5 key steps we can take to save this species:



1. **Protect and manage California overwintering sites**
2. **Restore breeding and migratory habitat in California**
3. **Protect monarchs and their habitat from pesticides**
4. **Protect, manage, and restore summer breeding and fall migration monarch habitat outside of California**
5. **Answer key research questions about how to best aid western monarch recovery**

To check out their plan in more detail, [visit their site](#).

To read more statistics and data from the overwintering report, [see here](#).

“Early Signs of Hope as Monarch Butterflies Return to California Overwintering Sites.” *Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation*, 21 Oct. 2021, <https://xerces.org/press/early-signs-of-hope-as-monarch-butterflies-return-to-california-overwintering-sites>. Press release.



Calling all Community Scientists!

We are looking for volunteers to visit local overwintering sites and contribute data to the Xerces Society's Western monarch count. It is through this effort that the overwintering population is assessed. The counts are centered around the holidays, so if you've got relatives in town you can make it a family affair!

There will be 2 rounds of counts taking place:



Thanksgiving Count

Saturday, November 13th through Sunday, December 5th

New Year's Count

Saturday, December 25th through Sunday January 9th

To find overwintering sites near you, you can [visit here](#).

If you are interested, please reach out to **Melissa Stepek from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife Service**. She will connect you with a sign up sheet to see which overwintering sites need the most support and when.

Please note that due to pandemic precautions, there will be no trainings on how to survey the sites but below are a list of great resources for self-learning:

1. [Training Videos – Western Monarch Count](#) – Please watch the second video on the page called “Southern California Western Monarch Count Refresher Training.” This one is specific to our area.
2. [Step-by-Step Monitoring Guide – Western Monarch Count](#)
3. [Survey 123 – Western Monarch Count](#) – This ESRI app is the main mobile app we use for collecting data.
4. [Data Sheets, Survey Protocols – Western Monarch Count](#) – If you are unable to download the Survey123 app to take data, you can use the data sheet on this page (download the one called Data Sheet – Monarch Count).

Volunteer Opportunity

The Grove Park pollinator garden needs some TLC and replanting, so we are looking for volunteers to help on **Saturday, November 13th** from **9:30am - 12:30pm**.

We suggest you wear some comfy gardening clothes that you don't mind getting dirty, and bringing:

- A hat and sunscreen
- Your favorite weeding and/or digging tools
- Water, snacks and/or your own lunch

Volunteers will park and meet at **1161 Via Teresa, San Marcos CA 92069**.

If you are interested in helping, or have any more questions, please reach out to the organizer, Vincent Bellino: contact@restoringcalifornia.com or call at 760-215-2837

Updates on the San Diego Native Milkweed Project!

We are now in year 3 of the San Diego Native Milkweed Project, which is our effort to propagate milkweed native to our area and make it available for purchase at local

We think that seed from the local area will thrive better and be more appropriate for habitat restoration, so we set out in partnership with Earth Discovery Institute and others to collect seed from wild sources and farm them in our San Diego soil.

Over the last couple months, volunteers have helped collect and clean seeds from the Lakeside farm. Our next step is to distribute seeds to growers. We hope to have plants available for purchase at a nursery near you by Fall 2022!



San Diego Native Milkweed being grown at the Lakeside farm.

Upcoming Events

Fall Garden Festival 2021 | Saturday, November 13th at 10:00am-2:00pm

Garden Member Preview 9:00-10:00am

Cost is admissions to The Garden:

General admission \$8 / Seniors \$5

Children \$4 / Children under 2 yrs Free

Garden Members Free

Free Tree Giveaways with Ms. Smarty-Plants™ thanks to our generous partner SDG&E, the Fall Plant Sale, a Live Well San Diego Proclamation, and a variety of fabulous garden vendors, as well as local art and jewelry.

Come visit our booth to chat about pollinators!

See more on their site [here](#).



Pollinator Resources

- If you or someone you know is interested in planting a pollinator garden, our [Pollinator Toolkit](#) is a great resource to share!
- Now is a great time to start planting natives to support our pollinator friends. [Here is a list of nurseries](#) to visit from the California Native Plant Society.
- We are still working diligently on the Native Milkweed project, and are currently cleaning and weighing seed collected from our native milkweed farm and other wild sources. [Stay up to date on our progress here](#).

Wishing you and your garden peace and abundance as the season turns!

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