

SEEDLINGS - Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones Newsletter - October 2026

"There can be no purpose more enspiriting than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us."

—E.O. Wilson

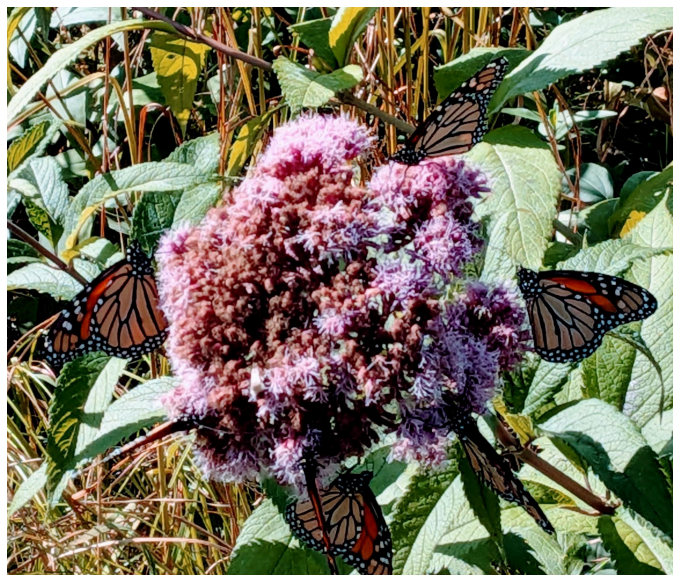


Sawtooth sunflower (*Helianthus grosseserratus*)

Dear friend,

In early September Paul and I took a trip to Lake Superior and were amazed to see hundreds of monarchs. That same week, Ilse wrote to tell me about a monarch migration piece she was working on. She confirmed that the easterly wind described in her article (which you can read below) would probably have pushed a lot of monarchs straight west instead of on a more diffused southwest track. Paul took this photo in Bayfield, Wisconsin, on September 10.

Beth Bradburn, editor



Our October Program



Co-sponsored by Audubon Society of Kalamazoo, our October program features Jessica Hagen, Gail Walter, and students from the Super Epic Earth Defender (SEED) group. Please join us to explore the importance of nighttime and the vital role darkness plays in healthy ecosystems. You can learn more about this presentation [on our event webpage](#). Please note that this month's program is at a different time and location from usual. It will be **Monday, October 26, at 7:00pm at People Church**. Come at 6:30 for social time.

Fall Plant Exchange



Around eighty people attended our fall plant exchange in Crane Park this year. A big thank you to the many volunteers who helped run the exchange as well as those of you who donated your plants!

And if you took away some new native plants, we hope they find a good home in your garden. Our plant exchanges take place twice a year; we look forward to seeing you again.

Milham Park Tour

September 10 was a beautiful evening for a walking tour of ecological restorations at Milham Park, led by Randy Counterterman and Kaldis Grants. Many thanks to Randy and Kaldis as well as the approximately fifty Wild Ones who attended! Photos by Mel Luna.



2027 KAWO Elections

It's time to elect our officers for 2027. If you want to support the work of Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones and connect with other local native plant enthusiasts, please consider running for the executive committee. We elect four officers and four at-large members annually, with terms beginning in January.

The **president** helps prepare meeting agendas, presides over executive and membership meetings, represents the chapter to other organizations and to the public (or delegates representation), communicates with the national office, and oversees the annual national report. The **vice president** acts in place of the president as necessary and should be willing to succeed as president. The **treasurer** maintains financial records, including the chapter's savings and checking accounts, prepares a monthly financial report, and prepares and submits an annual financial report to the national office. The **secretary** helps prepare and circulate meeting agendas and financial reports, transcribes and circulates meeting minutes, collects annual

conflict-of-interest statements, and reports election results to the national office. The four **members-at-large** participate in executive committee meetings, standing committees, and chapter activities. In 2026 executive committee meetings took place quarterly.

You can speak to any of [our 2026 officers](#) to learn more about their roles. If you would like to run for an office, please email the secretary, [Cameron Lockwood](#), by November 1.

The election takes place via email. On November 2, we will send members a link to an online ballot. Members will have until November 23 to vote and we will announce the election results at our November in-person program as well as in the January newsletter. Please note that if your membership has expired, or expires before November 2, you will not receive a ballot. If you wish to run for an office or vote in the election, please join Wild Ones or make sure your membership is current. You can do either on the [National Wild Ones website](#). Finally, if you want to volunteer with Wild Ones but don't want to take on an officer position right now, please [email us](#) and we will help you find a role. You can also email us with general questions about the election or other business.

Planting Partnerships Taking Root

The 2026 planting partnerships organized by Community Projects chair Paul Laferriere have plants in the ground. Gull Prairie Preserve, YWCA Kalamazoo, Milwood Commons, and St. Michael Lutheran school are now homes to a total of 871 young native plants. Our established Glen Park project received some new plants as well. Paul and a crew of KAWO volunteers including Bruce Alden, Harry Bird, Beth Bradburn, Karin Larsen, Laura Moss, Ellie Shenker, and RosaLee Ward planted the gardens during the second half of September. At St. Michael, a couple dozen seventh and eighth graders enthusiastically assisted with the planting. And at the Y, Tom Small surprised us with some cookies.



Look for information about the 2027 planting partnerships in our November newsletter.

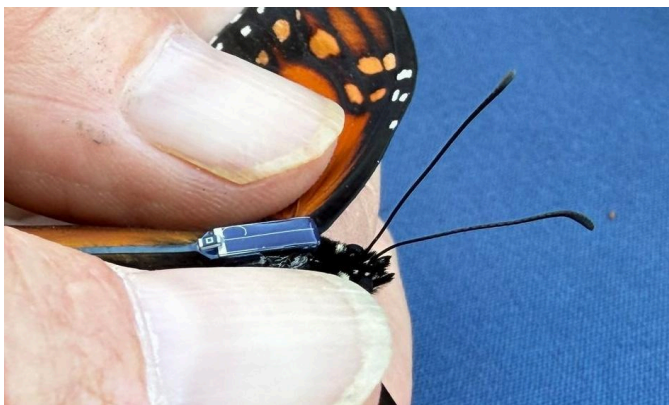


Community Projects also donated a few plants to Kalamazoo Literacy Council's Cricket Garden, planted and maintained by KAWO member Jane Fisher Laing. Paul and I took about twenty plugs there last Saturday, and mentioned to Jane that we would be at the KPS Administration Building site the next morning for routine maintenance. Jane came by on Sunday to see the planting and took this beautiful photo of a monarch on the grass-leaved goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*).

Monarch Migration in Real Time

by Ilse Gebhard

A revolutionary tracking study that follows the monarch butterfly migration to their overwintering locations in Mexico in the fall and back to the southern United States in the spring was initiated in the fall of 2025.



Project Monarch, a collaborative effort founded by Cellular Tracking Technologies (CTT) and the Cape May Point Arts & Science Center (CMPASC), united over twenty partner organizations to deploy over 500 BlūMorpho transmitters (also called radio tags or just tags) on migrating monarchs during the fall of 2025.

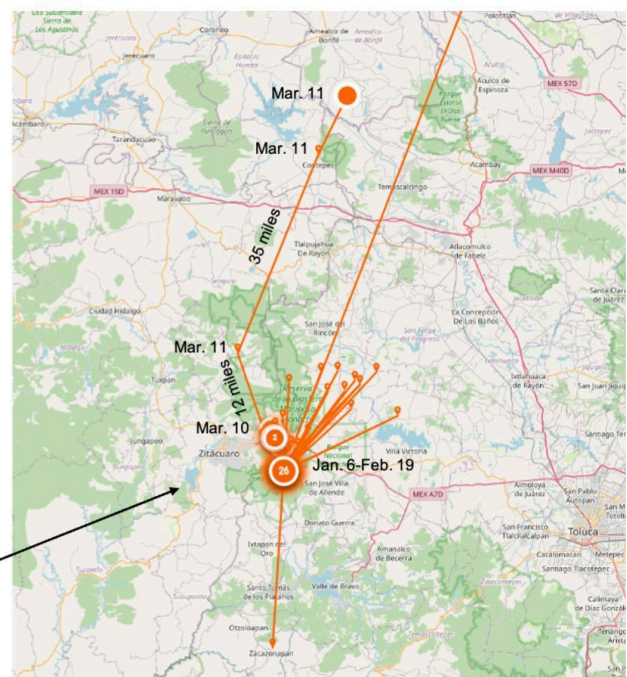
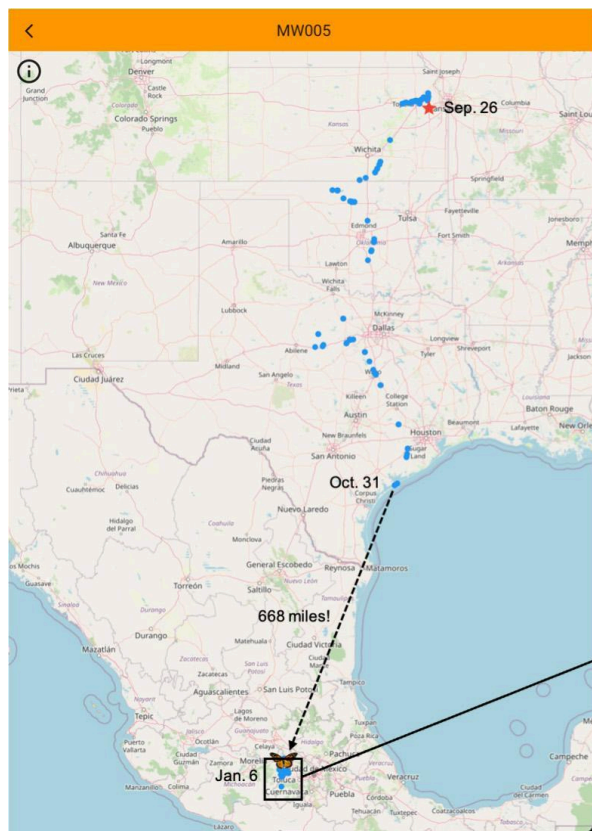
Transmitter being attached to a monarch at the Cape May Arts & Science Center

The results have overcome previous limitations in butterfly tracking, providing scientists with high-resolution, near-real-time data on individual butterflies as they navigate their long-distance journey south.

A number of the monarchs outfitted with transmitters were detected at the overwintering sites. Some of those transmitters sent signals as the monarchs moved north this spring. In addition, another 150+ overwintering monarchs were outfitted with transmitters to follow their migration north.

You can follow the migration on an app that you can download to your smartphone. Each monarch with a transmitter is identified by a code, associated with the collaborating organization and a number. For example, MW005 was the fifth individual tagged by Monarch Watch last fall and was detected migrating south in fall, at the overwintering sanctuaries during winter, and moving north this spring.

There are various types of receiving stations spread across the continent that detect the signals sent out by the deployed transmitters. Your smartphone, with the app installed, can be such a receiving station. This greatly increases potential detections, especially if you have an iPhone. On an iPhone the app runs in the background, without the need to be logged into the app, just as long as you have Bluetooth and “location finding” turned on. If you have an Android phone, you need to be logged into the app for your phone to pick up a signal. I have read that further refinement of the technology will allow the app to run in the background on Android phones as well.



Graphic created by Monarch Watch

Of course, the range of Bluetooth detection of your cell phone is only about thirty feet with no major line-of-sight obstruction. But hey, if you are out in your yard weeding, or for a walk in your neighborhood, and a tagged monarch flutters by within thirty feet, your phone will detect it. Upon detection, the app will send a report of the detection to a central location where all the detections are compiled and mapped, just as long as your phone is connected to the internet. Should you be out in the boonies without cell phone service, the app will send the detection as soon as you have active cell service.

You can download the app at:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.celltracktech.projectMonarch.project_monarch&hl=en-US

For information on the project, the fall 2025 migration, and the 2026 spring migration, see the links below.

<https://monarchwatch.org/radiotag/2025-2026/>

<https://monarchjointventure.org/blog/revolutionary-tracking-study-follows-monarchs>

<https://monarchwatch.org/blog/2025/11/07/radio-tagged-monarch-mw001-arrives-at-the-mbbr/>

<https://monarchwatch.org/blog/2025/11/17/project-monarch-collaboration>

Early Fall 2026 Monarch Migration

by Ilse Gebhard

The 2026 fall migration is in full swing, and by September 10, twenty-three organizations had deployed Project Monarch radio transmitters from both Canada and the northern US. As monarchs move south, I am sure other organizations from lower US latitudes will be deploying transmitters. I think we are in for a lot of surprises.

It is well known that monarchs cross Lake Erie during migration, especially from Point Pelee, which juts into the lake almost five miles. From the tip of the point, they can island-hop, as there is a chain of islands between the tip and the south shore of the lake. It is also known that monarchs cross Green Bay from the tip of the Stonington Peninsula in Michigan's upper peninsula (UP) to the west shore of Lake Michigan, and even to the tip of Wisconsin's Door Peninsula, a distance of about twenty-five miles.

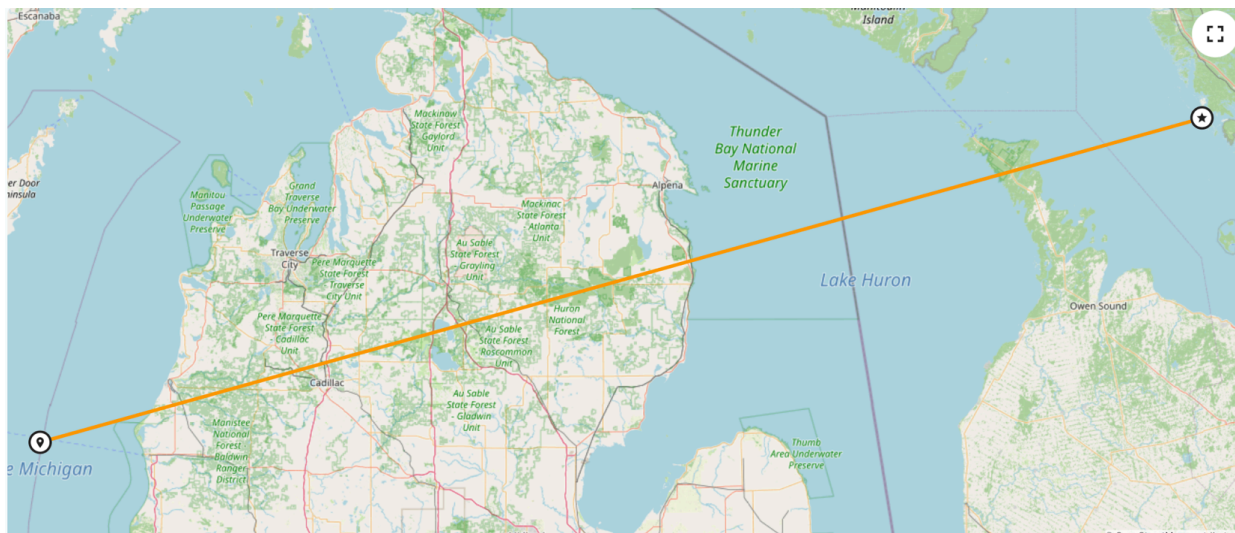
But what about monarchs crossing Lake Michigan, say, from Muskegon to Milwaukee, a distance of about eighty miles across open water? On a good easterly wind, that distance is easily covered by a monarch in a day. To my knowledge there are no records of such crossings until this

fall. To my surprise, there are several monarchs, outfitted with Project Monarch radio transmitters in Ontario, that moved across Lake Huron and through the lower peninsula, and were then detected in Wisconsin. There were no detections of these monarchs around the north or south shores of Lake Michigan. This leads me to conclude that they crossed the lake. Actually, they crossed two lakes, Huron and Michigan.

Having observed monarchs migrating along the lakeshore between Muskegon and South Haven many times, I always assumed that they refrained from crossing Lake Michigan. I believe crossing the lake is an anomaly caused by a strong east wind. Since our prevailing winds are from the west, I expect most monarchs in Michigan to move south along the lakeshore or inland. A strong westerly wind might even push them to the western Lake Huron shore where they have been observed migrating south in the past.

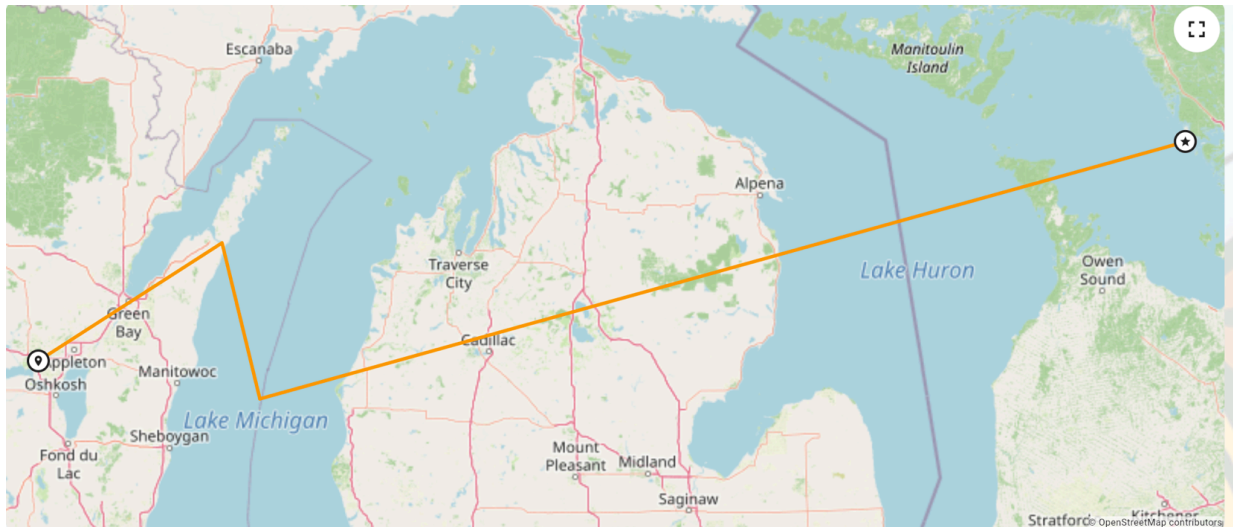
As one would expect, once the easterly wind shifted, the monarchs reset their internal compass and headed south to continue their migration to Mexico. Their general trajectory needs to be southwest. Below are four of the monarchs that crossed both lakes, showing their locations at the time of this writing on September 20, 2026. It is interesting to see how their paths diverged, even when released from the same location on the same day.

Monarch GBB26018 was released on August 29 by Environment & Climate Change Canada (ECCC) at Snake Island near the town of Parry Sound on the Georgian Bay. It was detected on September 11 at 4:56 PM in the middle of Lake Michigan.

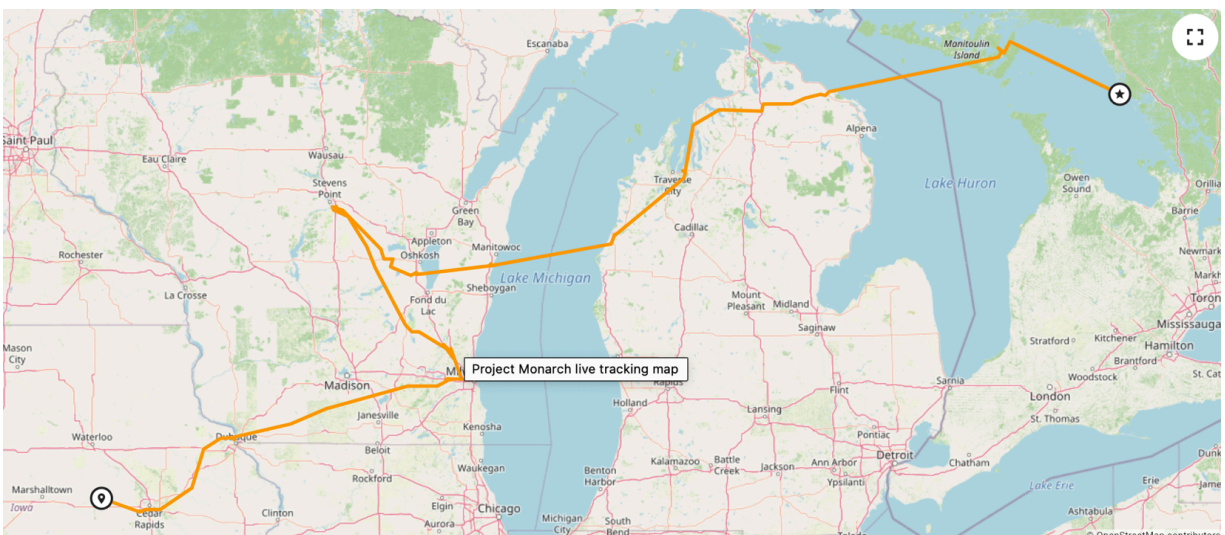


A little bit of sleuthing leads to the following explanation. There is a ferry that leaves Manitowoc, WI at 3 PM (ET) and arrives at Ludington at 7 PM (ET), a four-hour trip. About two hours into the trip, the ferry would have been about halfway across the lake. Here GBB26018

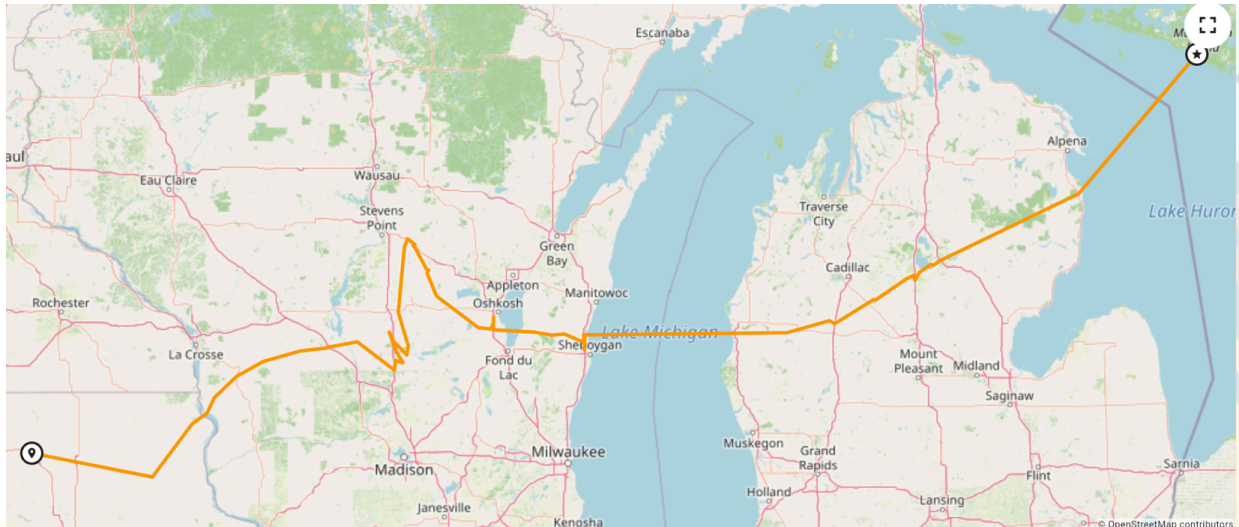
could have been detected by a smartphone, belonging to a passenger, that had the Project Monarch app installed. The distance between Manitowoc and Ludington is sixty-two miles, but the next detection showed the butterfly to have changed direction to the northwest, making the crossing across open water considerably longer than that. It was last detected southwest of Appleton, WI on September 16, 2026, having travelled 416 miles and been detected thirty-two times.



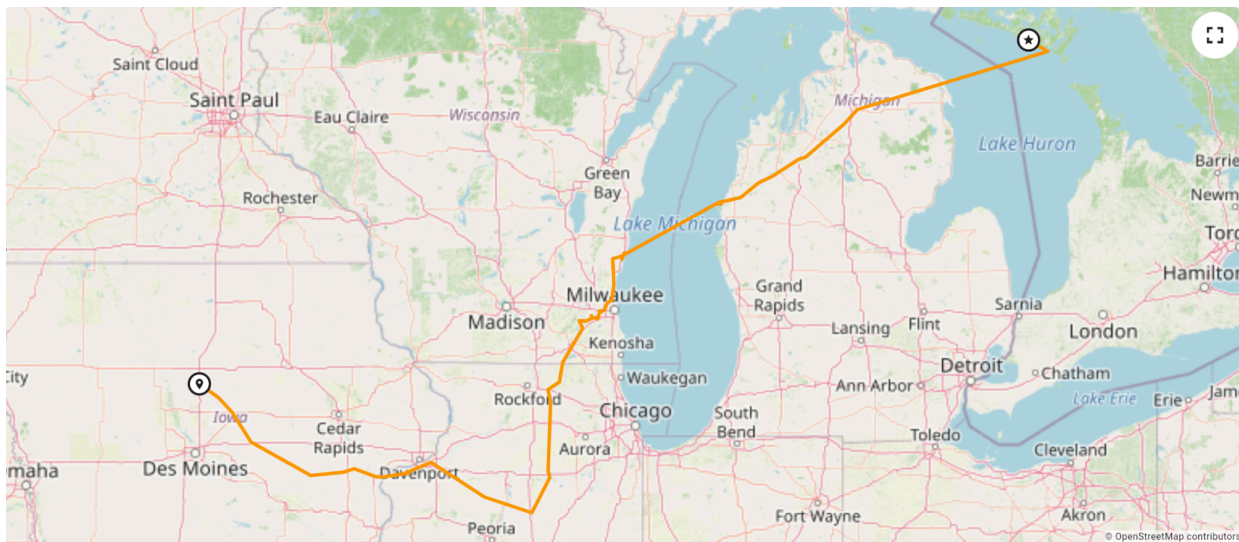
Monarch GBB26010 was released on August 29 by ECCC at the same place. It was last detected northwest of Cedar Rapids, IA on September 18, having travelled 632 miles and been detected 772 times.



Monarch MAN26004 was released on the south side of Manitoulin Island on August 25 by ECCC. Manitoulin Island is east of Drummond Island and forms the border between Lake Huron and what is called the North Channel. It was last detected near Charles City, IA on September 20, having travelled 546 miles and been detected 1174 times.

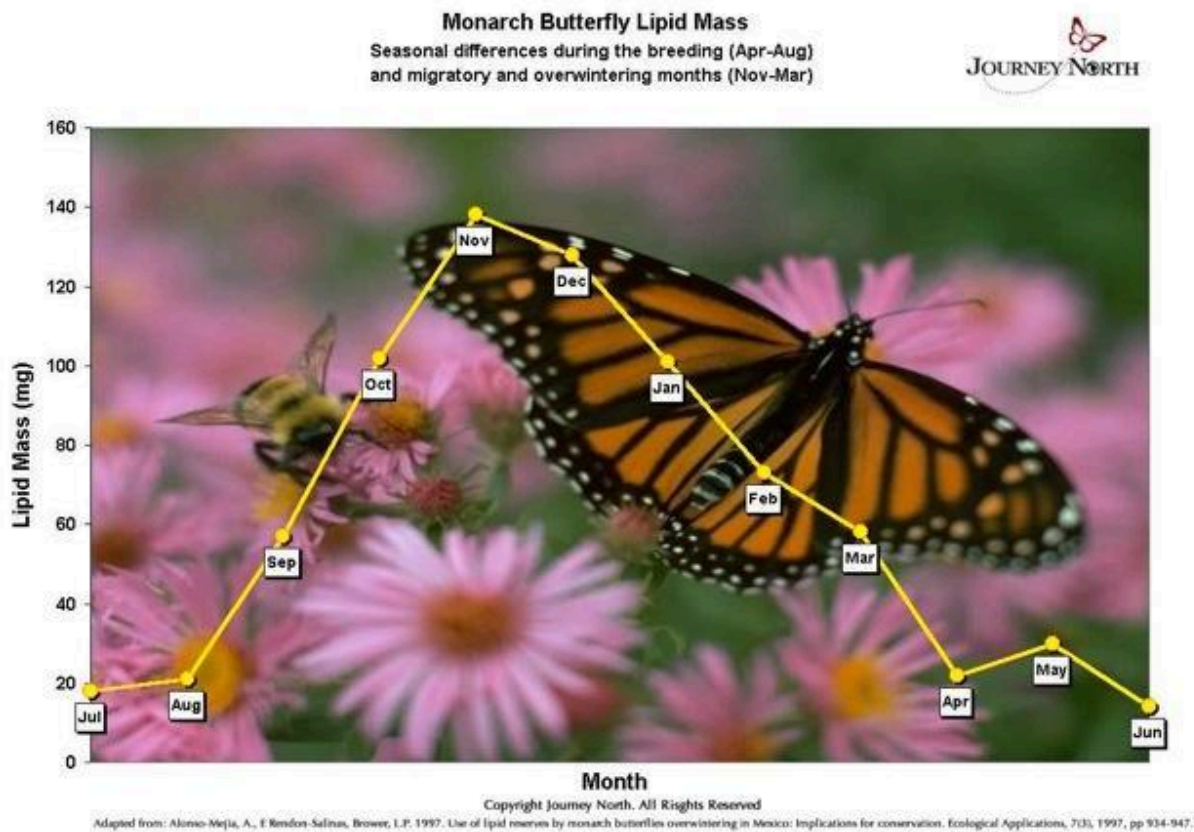


Monarch MAN26018 was also released on the south side of Manitoulin Island on August 25 by ECCC. It was last detected a few miles north of Ames, IA on September 20, having travelled 608 miles and been detected 1273 times.



As of this writing, September 20, GBB26018, a male, was still in northern Wisconsin and had very few detections. I suspect this does not bode well for his migration. The other three, all male as well, were last detected in Iowa. I imagine Iowa as border-to-border corn and soy beans, with

few nectar sources that monarchs need to fuel their southward migration, store up fat for overwintering in Mexico, and make the northward migration in spring.



Fat storage and usage by monarchs fall-spring

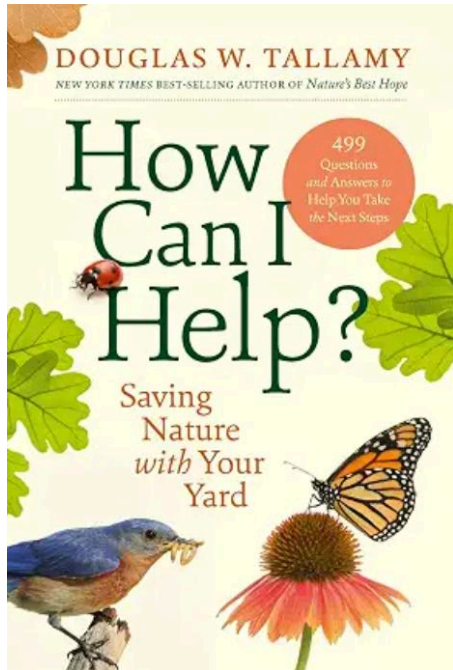
Organizations like [Monarch Joint Venture](#) and their local partners are working hard to encourage farmers to plant pollinator strips on the less productive areas of their farms. But creating habitat is a slow process. Do we have the time to save the monarch migration?

Just a note on the skewed male to female ratio: 4 to 0. Late August, when these monarchs were caught, radio tagged, and released was really the early part of the migration for the area. It has been well documented by previous tagging efforts (with tiny stickers) that males tend to migrate earlier than females.

Book Review: *How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard*

by Beth Bradburn

How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard, by Douglas W. Tallamy (Timber Press, 2025).



How Can I Help? consists of Tallamy's in-depth, scientifically grounded answers to questions he has received over his many years of conservation work. The questions are organized by subjects like biodiversity, native and non-native species, and home landscapes; this chapter arrangement, along with subheadings and a good index, enables a reader to find topics of interest without reading the book from cover to cover (though I recommend reading Tallamy's introduction and conclusion in full). It's obvious that the questions are real (not constructed by the author), so readers who are skeptical about native landscaping or have basic questions should find queries expressed in language that resonates with them. This will also be helpful to Wild Ones; I came away from the book with new insights about the resistance that native-landscape advocates face and how it might be addressed.

Who Am I? A Native Fauna ID Quiz from Ilse Gebhard



Visit [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org) for the answer!

(photo by Ilse Gebhard)

Community Events of Interest

Saturday, October 10, 1–3 pm. Old Growth Forest Dedication, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Visit the PCCI event calendar.](#)

Saturday, October 10, 6–8 pm. Kleinstuck Trail Walk with Meditative Concert, Kleinstuck Preserve. [Visit event web page.](#)

Sunday, October 11, 10am–12pm. Volunteer Workday, Kleinstuck Preserve. [Visit event web page.](#)

Tuesday, October 13, 10:30am–12pm. Seed Collecting Volunteer Day, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Visit the PCCI event calendar.](#)

Tuesday, October 13, 6:30–7:30 pm. Honorable Harvest Lecture Series: Camille Dungy’s “Soil: The Story of a Black Mother’s Garden,” discussion facilitated by Dr. Julie Stotz-Ghosh. Marilyn J Schlack Culinary and Allied Health Building, 418 E Walnut Street. [Visit event web page.](#)

Thursday, October 15, 6–8:30 pm. Author Visit: Camille Dungy, “Soil: The Story of a Black Mother’s Garden,” Kalamazoo Valley Museum. [Visit event web page.](#)

Thursday, October 15, 7pm. Pints and Native Plants, Brewery Outré. [Visit event web page.](#)

Saturday, October 17, 11am–1pm. Michigan Botanical Society Field Trip: From Pheasant Back to Turkey Tail: On the Hunt for Fall Mushrooms, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Visit event web page.](#)

Saturday, October 17, 1–2 pm. Fall Comes to the Forest: Guided Nature Walk at Oshtemo Township Park. [Visit event Facebook page.](#)

Monday, October 19, 6:30–8pm. Wild Ones River City Program: “John Ball Zoo’s Habitat Hero Program,” Roselle Park Resource Building, Ada, MI. [Visit event web page.](#)

Tuesday, October 20, 6:30–7:30 pm. Honorable Harvest Lecture Series: “Rewilding Childhood: Restoring Wonder, Resilience, and Connection through Nature,” with Larissa Touloupas, Solfed Farms. Marilyn J Schlack Culinary and Allied Health Building, 418 E Walnut Street. [Visit event web page.](#)

Wednesday, October 21, 4–6 pm. Volunteer Tree Planting Day at Kalamazoo Nature Center. [Visit event web page.](#)

Saturday, October 24, 2–3 pm. “Beer, Bread, and Blight: How Fungi Have Shaped Human History,” a presentation at Kalamazoo Nature Center. [Visit event web page.](#)

Monday, October 26, 7–8pm. KAWO monthly program: “Guardians of the Night – Why Darkness Matters,” with Jessica Hagen and Gail Walter, People’s Church. This program is co-sponsored by the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo. Note different day and start time. [Visit event web page](#).

SEEDLINGS appears mostly monthly and is edited by Beth Bradburn. Ilse Gebhard is Contributing Editor. The next regular issue will arrive in November. Submission deadline is October 20.

[Contact the editor](#)

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