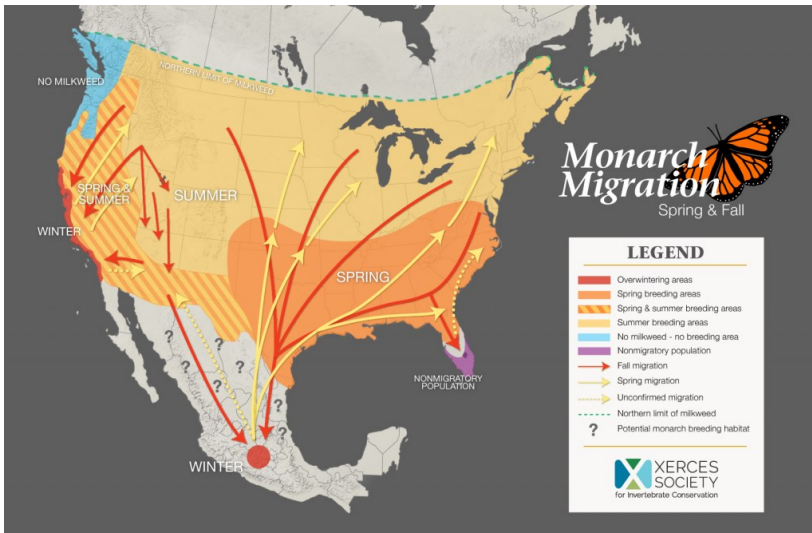


Advent I - Hope

You Will Need:

Advent Candles

A Way to Play YouTube



Take a moment to look at the map. Every winter, monarchs fly to either Mexico or the coast of California to rest. Notice that they winter near where you live!

Watch this YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3njFNmc-W2k&t=9s>) on the Monarch migration in Mexico. Listen for:

- What monarch wings sound like.
- Why the monarch population is dropping.
- What we can do about it.

After you watch the video, reflect on how it made you feel. What would it be like to be surrounded by millions of monarchs? Phil Torres, the creator of this video and others he calls the Jungle Diaries, has wanted to see the butterfly migration site since he was five. What are some of your favorite insects?

Now answer the questions for which you were listening.

The Xerces Society works to protect invertebrates, like the monarch. Every Thanksgiving hundreds of volunteers spread out along the California coast and count monarchs. They are counting right now and plan to finish on December 5th, so let us hope they are finding a lot of monarchs! Unfortunately, last year they found only 1,914. That is 99.9% decrease since the 1980s. This means the monarchs are in trouble. It is not just the western monarchs that winter in California, but there are less monarchs wintering in Mexico too. The monarch numbers are so dangerously low that those that love and study them want the monarch listed as an endangered species.

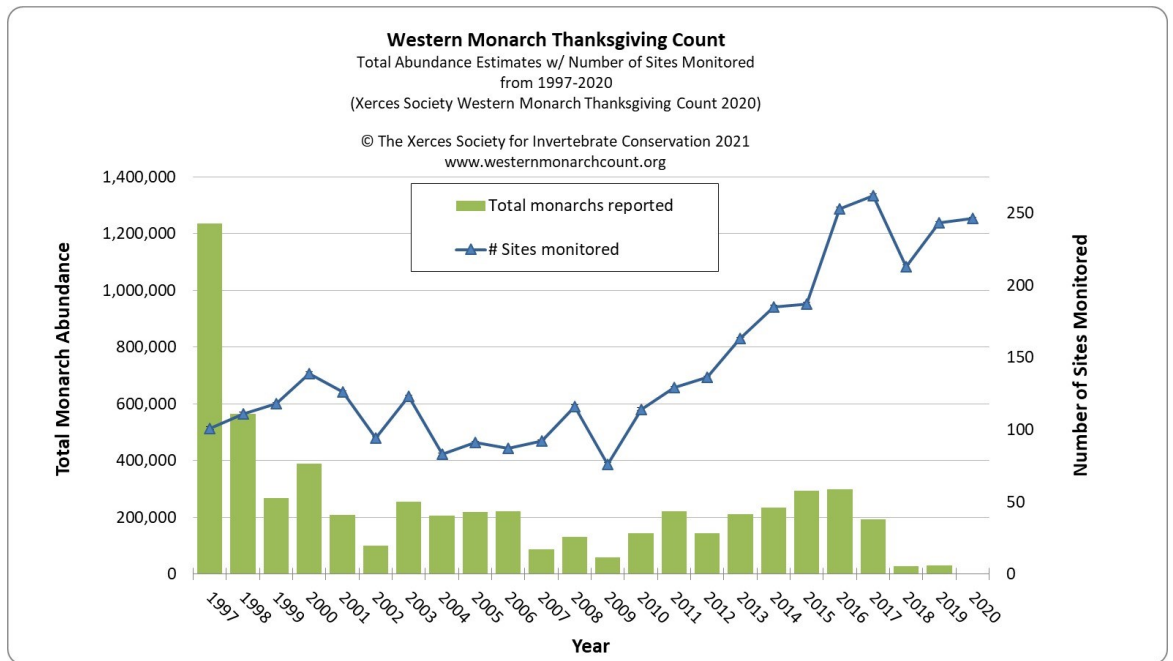
The number of monarchs is dropping for many reasons. One is that there is no longer enough milkweed, which is the only plant on which a monarch can lay its eggs and the only food monarch caterpillar can eat. Milkweed has been cut down for farms, houses, and other development. The lack of habitat has dramatically affected the number of monarchs.



This graph shows the falling number of monarchs over the past 24 years that the Xerces Society has done the Thanksgiving count.

Question:

What do you notice about the number of places the volunteers are looking versus the number of monarchs they are finding?



The fact that we look harder even when there are less monarchs to count, tells us many things; one is that those who love and study monarchs are hoping things will get better. They are looking harder and harder, hoping they will find more monarchs. Hope is an important part of being human and an important part of our faith.

Light the first Advent candle, the candle representing HOPE.

Read Romans 8:24-25

“If we see what we hope for, that isn’t hope. Who hopes for what they already see? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we don’t see, we wait for it with patience.”

Questions:

What does this mean? Try to say it in your own words.

Why is it important to be patient when we are hoping?

The amazing thing about hope is that we hope even though we cannot see how thing will work out. We do not know if we can save the monarchs, but we and many others have enough hope to try. If we had no hope, we would not bother. As a church, we are creating a pollinator garden full of milkweed and flowers monarchs like to use for food.

Why are we doing this?

Why is this a project about hope?

As Christians, we trust that God loves us and the world God created.

How does this help us hope?



Hope & patience at work

Advent Week I Project:

If you and your family have time over the holidays, visit one of the migration sites in your area. It is a rare treat to be able to see the monarchs as they rest over the winter. Fortunately, there are several sites near you. And there is a bit of good news—this year, they have already counted more monarchs than last year! So, you might be able to see hundreds of these amazing creatures. If you want to see the monarchs flying around, go when it is above 55 degrees and sunny. When it is below 55 degrees, they huddle in groups to keep warm. This is also an amazing sight as they fold their wings up making themselves look like dead leaves hanging from the tree. This helps protect them from predators.

If you go to one of these sites, bring your binoculars and take pictures. Share your photos with Sally or Jim. We want to use them in worship and for publicity about our new pollinator garden!

Here are a few places you can visit:

- Ardenwood Historic Farm in Fremont
- Monarch Grove, Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz
- Monarch Sanctuary, Pacific Grove, Monterey
Pacific Grove has one of the largest monarch overwintering sites in America and the largest population of overwintering monarchs in Monterey County for public viewing.

For more information visit: <https://www.gamblegarden.org/where-to-view-monarchs-bay-area/>



Thousands of monarch butterflies gather in the eucalyptus trees at the Pismo State Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove.
Credit...George Rose/Getty Images

Resources for Additional Information:

<https://www.monarchmilkweedmapper.org/western-monarch-biology/>

<https://xerces.org/blog/western-monarch-population-closer-to-extinction-as-wait-continues-for-monarchs-protection>

A ray of hope: <https://ktla.com/news/california/california-sees-return-of-monarch-butterflies-after-record-low/>