



Monarch Levels at Low Ebb

by Robin Irwin

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA—If you've seen few monarchs or caterpillars this year, you may not be alone. "Early indications suggest that this might be a very low year in the upper midwestern U.S., and possibly other areas as well," says Dr. **Karen Oberhauser**, on the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project web site at the University of Minnesota. Chip Taylor, Monarch Watch, noted that this may be the smallest migration to Mexico since 2004.

Here at Happy Tonic, we saw almost no monarch eggs or caterpillars and our members' observations would also appear to confirm Oberhauser's conclusion. Only three members have reported seeing adult butterflies or caterpillars this season.

Mike Schroeder, Spooner, Wisconsin, spotted several adult butterflies in the South Dakota Badlands. **Lynda Ireland**, St. Leonard, Maryland, observed one caterpillar on her milkweeds. **Jack Hohos** in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, saw only one adult despite his milkweed growing to six feet tall. **JoAnn Flanagan** also reported low monarch numbers in Oregon, Ohio. 



Monarch butterfly caterpillars on swamp milkweed
© Mary Ellen Ryall

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Stem Rust Threatens World Wheat Crop

by Robin Irwin

St. Paul, Minnesota, USA—A virulent disease that affects wheat is damaging crops in Africa and the Mideast and threatening to spread worldwide.

Known as Ug99 wheat stem rust—so called because it was discovered in Uganda in 1999—the pest could attack as much as 80% of the world's crop if it spreads to the US and other wheat-growing countries. It spreads by wind-blown spores, potentially over great distances.

Crop scientists are working feverishly to develop new varieties of wheat which are resistant to the disease, a process that could take nine to 12 years. Because some varieties already show limited resistance, scientists can employ standard plant breeding techniques rather than resort to genetic engineering.

Farmers have been struggling with different strains of stem rust for as long as humans have grown wheat. The disease last hit the United States in the mid-1960s. Outbreaks in the 1950s twice destroyed nearly 10% of the nation's wheat crop.

Wheat provides roughly 20 percent of all food calories for the world's population. It is second most important food crop, following corn.

Sources: www.latimes.com, www.nytimes.com, www.farmandranchguide.com 

Points of interest Food Safety Facts

- According to a recent IBM consumer survey, the number of people who trust food companies to produce safe, healthy food has dropped to less than 20 percent.
- Forty-nine percent of people polled claimed they would be unlikely to ever again purchase a product that has been recalled due to a food safety issue.
- China has 20% of the world's population, but only 7% of its farmland and fresh water resources.
- The USDA estimates that it takes seven pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef.



Sandy Stein with Happy Tonics local crops and products at Soup Stock III
© Mary Ellen Ryall

Happy Tonics Events in the News

Turtle Lake, Wisconsin, USA—Happy Tonics exhibited at Soup Stock III on 19 September 2009. **Elaine Evans** gave a fascinating talk about bumble bees. Native bees need our help. Learn more about identifying and creating habitat for the bumble bee in Elaine’s book, *Befriending Bumble Bees*. The book can be purchased on line at www.befriendingbumblebees.com.

Hayward, Wisconsin, USA—**Sandy Stein** and **Mary Ellen Ryall** spoke at the Lac Courte Oreilles Sustainable Living and Wellness Fair, at the convention center in Hayward, Wisconsin, on 25 September 2009. Ryall spoke about risks of genetic engineering of the food supply and Stein spoke about the Three Sisters Native Garden. **Joel Salastin**, of Polyface Farm, Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, was the keynote speaker. Salastin is featured in **Michael Pollan’s** book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*. Salastin raises grass fed poultry and animals. His mission is “healing the land.” Visit Polyface Farm on the Internet at <http://www.polyfacefarms.com>. View Ryall’s video, *Chasing the Monarchs through the Corporate Killing Fields*, on You Tube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZ7v19qJIAA.

Food Security Issues Come to the Heartland

Des Moines, Iowa, USA—The 13th Annual Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) Conference took place on 11–13 October 2009. Approximately 600 attendees came from around the country to partake in the local grown and organic sustainable food conference. The theme of the conference was From Commodity to Community Food Politics and Projects in the Heartland.

According to Community Food Security Coalition, “Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.” Visit www.foodsecurity.org to learn more about growing healthy farms, people and communities.



Iowa wind farms as far as the eye can see © Mary Ellen Ryall



Right: Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center, CFSC event presenter © Mary Ellen Ryall



Pearl-Bordered Fritillary © Lee Slaughter, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation

European Butterflies at Risk

Brussels, Belgium—A new report from the European Union (EU) claims that grasslands, wetlands and butterflies are threatened in Europe. The report blames an increase in farmland use, plus climate change, tourism and poor land management for a decline in biodiversity across the 27-nation bloc.

The study examined 216 habitats and 1,182 species. It concluded that 65 percent of habitats and 52 percent of all species are in either bad or unfavorable conservation status.

EU nations have agreed to set aside 17 percent of their territory to preserve wildlife habitat. EU Environment Commissioner **Stavros Dimas** is calling on member states to step up those efforts to set aside land for conservation.

Low populations of some butterfly species are troubling observers in the United Kingdom. **Phil Boggis** of the Cornwall Butterfly Conservation blames two succeeding wet summers for further reducing the populations of some already-faltering species—the High Brown Fritillary, the Pearl-Bordered Fritillary, and the Heath Fritillary.

Source: www.straitstimes.com and <http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk/>

Happy Tonics' Members in the News

It was announced at the Annual Meeting on 31 October 2009, that **Cindy Dyer** of Dyer Design, Alexandria, Virginia, will replace **Cher Hillsdale** as Vice President of Marketing and Membership as of 1 November 2009. **Jackie Remlinger**, copy editor of *Butterflies and Gardens*, has also retired. Both Hillsdale and Remlinger have honored Happy Tonics with their professional gifts since 2006. We are grateful for a job well done. Thank you, Cher and Jackie.

Diane Dryden wrote the story around *A Midsummer's Memoir: Marnie's Story*. **Marnie Housel** wrote poetry for the book following a terrible accident she was in three years ago.

Gloria Thue began a new career as a parish nurse. Thue says, "It is a way to serve." She is retired from an active career in the nursing field.

Mary Ellen Ryall, Executive Director, was honored with a scholarship to attend the 13th Annual Food Security Conference, 11–13 October 2009, in Des Moines, Iowa.

Ryall had the opportunity to meet Wisconsin author **Michael Perry** at the Wisconsin Regional Writers Association (WRWA) spring conference in Siren, Wisconsin, on 2 May 2009. Perry was a keynote speaker and addressed breaking into the writers market. After the conference, Perry autographed copies of his book, *Coop: A Year of Poultry, Pigs, and Parenting*.

Susan Engebrecht won second place in the Lindemann Humor Contest at the WRWA spring conference.

Janet Kay (Jenson) published her first book, *Waters of the Dancing Sky*. The book can be ordered online at www.watersofthedancingsky.com. Jenson is a member of the St. Croix Writers Group in Solon Springs, Wisconsin.

Deneen Stambone, contacted us to let us know that President **Barack Obama** visited her school, Wakefield High School, in Arlington, Virginia, on 8 September. The President's message was intended to encourage youth to persevere and succeed in school. 🍃



Michael Perry and Mary Ellen Ryall © WRWA, Anna Martineau Merritt, Misty Pines Photography



Engebrecht © Mary Ellen Ryall



Monarchs and Other Critters Flutter in Fall Parade

Shell Lake, WI, USA—On 3 September 2009, adults and children put on their insect wings and marched in the 35th Town and Country Days Parade. Shell Lake Girl Scouts Troop 4392 made colorful outfits from recycled cardboard and water based paint. One youngster said, "I am marching as a ladybug." Another proudly showed her dragonfly wings. Some of the elders marched as monarch butterflies. The youngest marchers, **Ella** and **Theron**, had a lovely time just being butterflies. The monarch marchers grow in number each year. We love each and every one of them for marching and supporting the Monarch Butterfly Habitat in Shell Lake. 🍃



Top, left: Happy ladybug © Mary Ellen Ryall. Middle: Theron taking a break © Jen Barton. Bottom, left: Liberty at her sweetest dressed as monarch © Mary Ellen Ryall

The Mystery of the Missing Monarchs

by Robin Irwin

Miami, Florida, USA—At Happy Tonics, we're frequently asked the mystifying question, "Where have all the monarchs gone?" Now, one Happy Tonics member finally has the answer, at least in her neighborhood.

While chatting with a neighbor, **Eunice Smith** reports, the subject eventually came around to gardening. Eunice admitted that, despite the milkweed and other butterfly-attracting plants in her yard, she'd not seen many monarchs this year.

The neighbor smiled, and confessed that, following Eunice's example, he too had planted a butterfly garden. Now, he said, he was seeing scores of monarchs in his yard. "I didn't know whether I should strangle him or just laugh," she says. "But at least now I can rest easy knowing that my monarchs have just moved over the fence to my neighbor's yard!" 🍃

Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Grant News

Shell Lake, Wisconsin, USA—Happy Tonic was honored with a generous grant from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board in part to help the nonprofit complete a 1/2 acre cedar split rail fence at the Monarch Butterfly Habitat. The WEEB grant will also fund Happy Tonic Environmental Education Programs throughout Wisconsin and help fund a 2010 III Annual Earth Day Event.

At the Annual Meeting, **Bob Hasman** noted that Earth Day is only celebrated on one day each year. Hasman holds that Earth Day should be about teaching environmental ethics and that “Earth Day Is Every Day.” Hasman and **Sandy Stein**, Secretary of Happy Tonic, are exploring ways Happy Tonic can Honor the Earth with a celebration that is more in keeping to returning pollinators such as monarchs and bees and the plants that welcome them.

Earth Day takes place on 22 April 2010 this year. In Wisconsin the weather is unpredictable in April and the earth itself has not even awakened from its winter slumber yet. 



The cedar split rail fence in the Monarch Butterfly Habitat is now complete.
© Diane Dryden



Young people built this walking path at the Monarch Butterfly Habitat.
© Mary Ellen Ryall

AODA Youth Environmental Education Grant

Shell Lake, Wisconsin, USA—Our appreciation goes out to the Washburn County Alcohol and Other Drug Addictions (AODA) Commission for a grant that enabled Happy Tonic to purchase films to teach youth about the value of connecting to nature in volunteer projects. The environmental films show the danger of smoking and other addictions and encourage young people to choose healthy lifestyles and to give back to the community.

Several young people were inspired by the films and made a commitment to volunteer at the Monarch Butterfly Habitat to help a butterfly. Teens came away learning from nature instead of just hanging around and perhaps getting into trouble. We saw their smiles and at times we even saw them meditatively sitting in the pergola, helping to erect a split rail fence, water the plants and put down a wood chip path. We couldn't help but notice that they came away with a sense of pride and confidence. Nature does heal. 

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Amy Smith is our new environmental education intern from Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College. We are actively recruiting for a copy editor.

Sanctuary for the Monarch Butterfly

www.happytonics.org

Happy Tonic is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) environmental education and conservation organization and public charity. Our mission is to provide sanctuary for the monarch butterfly. Our purpose is to promote organic gardening, the importance of seed saving, and open pollination for biodiversity. The organization is dedicated to teaching about the risks of invasive species and genetic engineering to the food supply, and their impact on the environment, other species, indigenous and native crops, and health.

We provide educational lectures, films, and DVD documentaries on organic gardening, the plight of the monarch butterfly, and food safety issues. We offer milkweed seed to promote the planting of milkweed in order to provide food for the monarch butterfly. Milkweed is the only source of nutrition for the monarch caterpillar.



Monarch on milkweed © Cindy Dyer