

## Monarch on the Move

Written by Deb Scala and Judy Schmidt for Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge Fall Festival, 2015

### Need

scripts  
4-5 volunteers - 4 monarchs 1 narrator

### Props

Large map of migration route  
4 black hats with pipe cleaner antennae  
Monarch butterfly shirts  
Pictures with script on back  
Optional: music "Gotta Go To Mexico"

### **Narrator:**

Welcome to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

The Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is an insect. It is the best-known butterfly in North America and annual visitor to our refuge.

Monarchs are known for their long annual migration. In North America, they travel long distances in the fall, and again in the spring. They start to migrate south in August. They must get to frost-free areas before the weather gets cold. Freezing will kill them.

Do you know what they call a group of monarchs migrate together? (Pause for answers) I will give you a hint. It is a word that describes the movement of a butterfly when it flies. It \_\_\_\_\_s. (Listen for answers) It FLUTTERS! A group of flying monarchs is a flutter!

A flutter of migrating monarchs head north in the spring, when it warms up again. No single monarch makes the whole round trip. The Monarch is famous for its southward migration and northward return in summer.

We are doing our best to help the Monarch butterfly. Did you know they were in trouble?

The Monarch butterfly, also known as the mariposa monarca in Mexico, is in a very bad situation. The Monarch population has dropped by 90% in the last 20 years! Look around you. . . Now imagination yourselves as monarchs. . . and

you are the only one left out of the ten monarchs sitting around you. That is the loss of a lot of friends!

I would like to teach you the sign, from American Sign Language, for butterfly. Hold your hands lie this in front of you and flutter your fingers like wings. Try it!



Now in our play whenever you hear the word monarch and/or butterfly make this sign.

Get Ready! Get Set! FLUTTER!

**“Mighty” Generation #1 (Mexican accent)  
Hold poster board with picture of row crops**

“Hola, Amigos and Amigas! Aye Carrumba! I am a monarch butterfly (ASL butterfly) and I just spent the winter here in Mehico (mexico). The weather is warming up and my favorite plant, the milkweed, is now growing along my northward pathway. I will fly between 50-100 miles a day depending on Mother Nature and the weather she provides.

It is such a beautiful trip but long. I am a bit tired so I will come down to earth to find some milkweed and flowers.

Oh, Cheee Wawa! What is going on down here? All I see are row after row after row of crops that the farmer has recently planted! I have to fly a bit further. . .

Arriba! Finally I see some wildflowers and milkweed! Now I can eat the sweet nectar from flowers and lay my eggs on the milkweed plant. They will hatch and grow and then continue the journey North.

Do you know I am quite fussy? I lay my eggs ONLY on the Milkweed plant. AND the milkweed is the only plant that the monarch caterpillar eats!

Nowadays it can be very hard to find the plants I need. Aye Carrumba!”

## **Generation #2 (Texas drawl)**

### **Hold poster board with photo Herbicide spraying**

Howdy Pardner! My Mama laid an itty bitty egg on the underside of that there milkweed plant and I popped out as a small caterpillar. I ate that milkweed leaf till I couldn't fit in my skin anymore. I done out grew myself 5 times till I became the new me! A pretty dang good looking monarch butterfly (ASL)! I am going to kick the bucket in 4-5 weeks, so I gotta hustle and I be headen North for my portion of the trip.

Every year it gets harder and harder to find what I need to survive. Farmers use "herbicides" to kill off what they call nasty weeds. I call those weeds GRUB!

I found a nice patch of milkweed along the interstate and laid my eggs on the underside of the leaf. I lay one egg at a time. However, I can lay over 100 eggs a day! I am a busy little bugger aren't I?

I better be getting a move on cause I need to lay the eggs of the third generation of monarchs (ASL) to complete the next leg of this here migration northward.

## **Generation #3 (Southern Belle)**

### **Hold poster board with picture of housing/strip mall vs. wildflower garden**

Now, how y'all doing this fine day? I am the rather gentile third generation of my monarch ancestors. I am a Southern Belle since I was born here in the southern part of the United States of America. People up North call us Southerners. People from Mexico call us Southerners even though we are North of them. Oh well, everything is fine and dandy here in this milkweed patch. I must be saying farewell and fly northward to follow the growing milkweed and wildflowers. Aren't they just lovely, now. Come join me as a travel to my destination.

We should be arriving soon, but my gracious, all I can see below are new houses, buildings, malls and parking lots! Goodness gracious what shall I do?

Oh, la-dee-day, some fine people over there have planted milkweed and other tasty flowers for my monarch (ASL) sipping pleasure. They are so accommodating to provide this Southern Belle with food, sweet nectar from flowers, and lodging for my eggs, the underside of the milkweed plant. Thank you, thank you, thank you! I surely do appreciate your thoughtfulness and planning for me and the fourth generation of monarchs (ASL)!

Do you know my sweet baby caterpillars only eat milkweed?

Thankie, and bye, you all. Time to join my soul sisters in the sky.

#### **Generation #4 (New Jersey accent)**

Well, I'll be a Monarch butterfly (ASL). . . I am in New Jersey. Where in New Jersey do you ask? I am at the wonderful Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge where the habitat suits me fine. I have just emerged from my lime green chrysalis and I see that I am surrounded by lots of aster and goldenrod for nectar. I must get strong for I have to leave this beautiful place soon and fly all the way back to Mexico. There are lots of us heading South. . . a whole "flutter" of us. We will ride the wind and stay over night in groups as the weather gets cooler.

It took four generations of monarch (ASL) ancestors to reach here each only living about 4-6 weeks. I am supercharged and will make the entire trip myself to Mexico, where I will spend the winter in the mountains with millions of other monarchs. Then, when the milkweed and wildflowers grow with the warmer weather, I will head north to lay eggs of the next generation. I will live longer than my northbound ancestors by living about 6 months instead of six weeks. So I will complete the cycle of migration that my ancestors started. Here I go....

#### **Narrator:**

And so the story continues generation after generation, year after year... the miraculous migration of the monarch butterfly. But. . . maybe not forever.

Will you help? How?

Simply plant milkweed in your yard. "Plant milkweed and they shall come."



