



DuPage Monarch Project: Communities Protecting Pollinators

Annual Report

2022



A collaboration of
Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
River Prairie Group of the Illinois Sierra Club
The Conservation Foundation
Wild Ones Greater DuPage Chapter

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Executive Summary

DuPage Monarch Project emerged this year with the fresh energy and growth of a prairie after drought. The ability to gather safely released a pent-up desire for learning and taking action together to solve the problems of declining biodiversity. The synergistic momentum of working towards a common goal propelled us through an active and exciting year.

The commitment to new, enhanced and established habitat continues to be strong, reaching an all time high of 32 acres. The growing awareness of the importance of trees for bees and butterflies is taking root locally. The recognition of trees as an essential component of pollinator habitat was reflected in Lisle Park District's Oak Regeneration Project, which is nurturing the growth of hundreds of homegrown oaks over the next several years for planting in their parks.

The importance of biodiversity is being discussed in classrooms, discovered at community events, explored on field trips and represented in art exhibits. Awareness of pollinator decline is rapidly spreading throughout a wide and diverse audience of all ages.

A multi-year collaboration with the DuPage Forest Preserve District to define, identify and map existing pollinator habitat FPD preserves began last summer and will continue through 2023..

DuPage Monarch Project's role in pollinator conservation was acknowledged this year when **ALDI Inc.** reached out for help identifying a recipient for a donation in memory of a former employee who was passionate about protecting pollinators. The donation will be used by the DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds to enhance a section of their pollinator garden.

We appreciate the Illinois Sierra Club's contribution of native plant seeds and funding for outreach materials about the solutions for the decline of monarchs, native bees and pollinators.

A generous donation from Ball Horticultural has provided the financial foundation for our work to continue for the next three years. We are grateful they share our vision of a pollinator-friendly county and for their confidence in the value of our work.

Biodiversity makes plant communities resilient and strong. It is the diversity of our supporters and members, the cities, park districts, garden clubs, libraries and non-profits, that is making DuPage a healthy and safe place for pollinators.



The Year in Numbers

4

NEW SIGNATORY MEMBERS

Bloomingdale
Carol Stream Park District
Village of Glen Ellyn
Itasca Park District

32

ACRES OF NEW & ENHANCED HABITAT

2

BIOBLITZ

DuPage Monarch Project, August
Glen Ellyn Park District, NRPA
Parks4Pollinators, September

10

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Bloomingdale Public Library
DuPage County Farm Bureau
DuPage Event Center & Fairground
Hank Gianvecchio Natural
Habitat Area Foundation
Illinois Prairie Path
Lombard Garden Club
St Mark's Episcopal Church - Glen Ellyn
The GardenWorks Project
Warrenville in Bloom
Wheaton Public Library

35

NEW MONARCH WAYSTATIONS



Outstanding Habitat and Engagement Achievements



Natural area along Yackley Path, Lisle Park District

Lisle Park District received the Jane Foulser Habitat Award for the Oak Tree Regeneration Project, an innovative, habitat enhancement project. LPD germinated hundreds of locally harvested acorns and is nurturing the seedlings for planting throughout their parks during the next several years. The project began in 2021 when LPD naturalist Ryan Jensen recognized a bumper crop of acorns as an opportunity for adding oak trees to their parks. “Like any good squirrel we decided to stock up and grow our own trees,” said Jensen.

Hundreds of acorns germinated, then repotted for an additional year of growth. In spring 2023, some will be transferred to larger pots and about 100 of the white and burr oak seedlings will be planted in the parks. The rest will be planted as they mature.

The Fox Valley Park District received the Pat Miller Community Engagement Award for their extensive catalog of classes, programs, camps and events providing opportunities to experience and learn about butterflies and bees.

FVPD offers classes about insects for grades K-5, beginning with introducing pollination, progressing to the relationship between pollinators and their habitat and the impact of biodiversity on prairies. Soon middle and high school students will have a chance to learn about land stewardship practices.

FVPD’s community engagement also includes posting educational signage at their natural areas. The interpretative signs provide information about native plants and their value for bees and butterflies that can be used in yards and gardens.



New Habitat for Pollinators



Lower Lot Prairie, Lisle Park District

We are seeing our parks, preserves, yards and gardens in new ways, as places where butterflies thrive. As our vision evolves, we see beauty in areas filled with native species that once were dismissed as weedy. Natural areas now flourish along paths, adjacent to the well trimmed grass of recreational fields, in detention basins and parking lot islands.

We're learning to share our landscaping with pollinators and give back the habitat that is essential for their survival. It is making a difference. The endangered rusty-patch bumble bee was observed this year in pocket prairies in Dubuque, Iowa. We may soon observe them in our own newly established natural areas

Together, we are on the path of species recovery. There is work yet to be done but we are headed in the right direction.

New and Enhanced Habitat

11.9 acres	Fox Valley Park District
19.0 acres	Naperville Park District
<u>2.0 acres</u>	<u>Glen Ellyn Park District (Invasives removed)</u>
32.9 acres	
10,000 sq ft	Warrenville, Illinois Prairie Path pollinator garden
<u>4,500 sq ft</u>	<u>Hanover Park Park District, Community Center</u>
14,500 sq ft	

Green Infrastructure: new/enhanced bioswales and detention basins

12	Downers Grove
2	Westmont
1	<u>Woodridge Park District</u>
15	

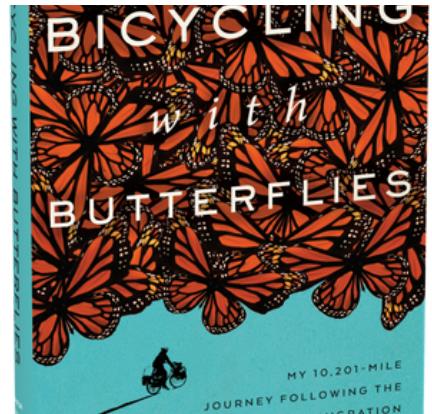
Community Engagement and Education

“We still do not know one thousandth of one percent of what nature has revealed to us.”

~ Albert Einstein

Every program, class, interpretative sign, pollinator garden walk and art exhibit connects us with nature.

Knowing, caring and acting are the solutions to monarch decline.



Top: 1 to r Kim White teaching about healthy practices for rearing monarchs; Connie Schmidt tabling at the DuPage County Fair; Interpretative signage, Fox Valley Park District **Bottom: 1 to r** Presentation by Sara Dykman about her round trip bicycle journey following the monarch migration; Members of Warrenville in Bloom planting a butterfly garden along the Prairie Path; Fox Valley Group Pollinator Field Trip

Operation Pollination: A Collaboration

Bioswales planted with deeply rooted native species are "green" ways of managing storm water and providing habitat for pollinators. A bioswale planted by the Woodridge Park District provided an opportunity for three organizations to be part of the solution to pollinator decline.

A wet area in the 83rd St Park had already been seeded when the Woodridge Park District received a call from Mary Onorad, President of the Woodridge Rotary Club. Rotary International had recently initiated Operation Pollination, a collaborative approach for local clubs to work with community partners on reversing pollinator decline. Onorad was looking for a partner and a location for planting a pollinator garden.

She found both at the Woodridge Park District.



1 to r: cardinal flower; sneezeweed; Salvia azurea; Bruce Blake, DMP habitat specialist, showing volunteers the steps for giving plants a good start.

The WPD seeded the bioswale in 2021 and by early 2022 plants were emerging but more were needed to fill in gaps to out compete opportunistic weeds. This was the opportunity Onorad was looking for; she would find funding for the additional plants needed to strengthen the bioswale's resistance to weeds. Adding more pollinator-friendly species also increases diversity which is beneficial for habitat resilience and pollinators. The park district agreed to designate a portion of the 150' long swale for her project.

As a newcomer to native plants and pollinators, Onorad reached out to the DuPage Monarch Project for suggestions on next steps. After consulting with Jim Kleinwachter, DuPage Monarch Project board member and Bruce Blake, DMP's Habitat Specialist, a decision was made to go with plants instead of seeds for quicker impact in heading off weeds. A list of plants was drawn up which were purchased from Prairie Wind Native Plants and planted by volunteers under Blake's guidance.

The park district watered three times a week until the plants were well established. By late summer, colorful flowers were blooming and the garden was a flourishing habitat.

The final step was informing park visitors why grass had been replaced with flowers. The bioswale project qualified for a grant from Illinois American Water. Those funds were used to purchase an interpretative sign.

Photo Credits

Cover	Witnessing Migration	Ashley Kamren
p. 3	DuPage County Campus Trail	Courtesy of DuPage County
p. 4	Illinois Prairie Path	Ken McClurg
p. 5	Yackley Path, Lisle Park District	Ryan Jensen
	Community engagement	Courtesy of Fox Valley Park District
p. 6	Lower lot prairie, Lisle Park District	Ryan Jensen
p. 7	Kim White, Raising Healthy Monarchs	Connie Schmidt
	Connie Schmidt tabling for DMP	DuPage Monarch Project
	Interpretative sign	Courtesy Fox Valley Park District
	Bicycling with Butterflies	
	Planting butterfly garden along Prairie Path	Warrenville in Bloom
	Pollinator program	Courtesy Fox Valley Park District
p. 8	Cardinal flower	DuPage Monarch Project
	Sneezeweed	DuPage Monarch Project
	Salvia aurea	DuPage Monarch Project
	Bruce Blake with volunteers	Mary Onorad