

DuPage Monarch Project: Communities Protecting Pollinators



Annual Report 2024

**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

Change is constant. It happens whether it's planned or unexpected, welcome or worrisome. Navigating change can be challenging but we are inspired by nature's ability to adapt and endure. We will do the same, adapt and endure. There have been changes this year but our core mission remains the same – to preserve nature's diverse, intertwined communities of plants and animals and lay the groundwork for their continued survival.

Pollinator Week expanded in 2024 and extended our outreach to new audiences. The partners and members filled Pollinator Week with seven events held at different locations around the county. There were ecogarden walks and tours, a guided hike at a high quality natural area and a class about monarchs. #Pollinate DuPage provided an opportunity for learning about pollinators and networking with fellow conservationist and the week ended with a Pollinator Party celebrating the fascinating creatures that keep natural areas humming and assist with producing our food.

The Chicago Sinfonietta invited DMP to be an outreach partner for a concert at North Central College featuring a piece inspired by monarch butterflies. Monarch Soul, composed by Juan Pablo Contreras, captured his childhood experience of celebrating the Day of the Dead with his family in Michoacan Mexico, a celebration with strong connections to monarch butterflies.

DuPage County undertook a revision of their beekeeping ordinance this year providing an opportunity to educate the decision makers about the impact of honey bees on native bees. Over the course of several weeks, DMP volunteers attended meetings and spoke on behalf of native bees. Summaries of the research on the competition for habitat between honey and native bees and the introduction of diseases into native bee populations were shared with members of the zoning committee and county board before the final vote was taken. The ordinance allowing more hives on county land passed by one vote. After the vote, Commissioner Lucy Chang Evans made a commitment to finding new locations for pollinator habitat on county land. It was agreed that mapping existing habitat was the first step for identifying the best locations for new habitat. The county's GIS department is currently working on the mapping project. The long-range goal is to link naturalized areas and create pollinator pathways within and through the county.

DMP members continued the transformation of the local landscape from turf to more inviting places for bees and butterflies. I had the pleasure of visiting nine sites in July that included a recently planted monarch garden in Darien, stunning mature plant communities in Darien and Bloomingdale and a very special piece of remnant prairie among the many acres of carefully restored and maintained ecosystems at the College of DuPage.

Each of the projects began with the commitment of time and resources needed for the planning, site preparation, planting and their long term maintenance. The diverse projects reflected the approach that worked best for each community, whether it was a rooftop garden or acres of naturalized land nestled within a park with ball fields and tennis courts. All had the same goal, to find a way people can live in harmony with nature. The native plant communities are fixing what was broken, mending the land, cleaning the air and water and bringing nature closer to where people live and work.

This is change we can live with.

The Year in Numbers

3

NEW SIGNATORY MEMBERS

Lombard Park District
West Chicago Park District
Westmont Park District

2

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Kane DuPage Soil & Water Conservation
District
Westmont Public Library

37

ACRES OF NEW, RESTORED, ENHANCED HABITAT

9

SITE VISITS

818

TREES AND SHRUBS ADDED TO PARKWAYS, PARKS & RESTORATIONS

20

DUPAGE MONARCH PROJECT PROGRAMS & TABLING EVENTS

600

FREE TREES DISTRIBUTED BY DUPAGE COUNTY

30

REGISTERED MONARCH WAYSTATIONS



Outstanding Habitat, Engagement and Pollinator Protector

Bumble bees and butterflies are declining because there are fewer places where they can find food, safe places to raise the next generation and spend the winter months. Four DuPage Monarch Project members made outstanding contributions to increasing the public's awareness of this problem and establishing the habitat needed to protect pollinators.

Seeing acres of neatly mowed grass brings golf to mind, not birds, butterflies and bumble bees. But the Elmhurst Park District, Village of Villa Park and Sugar Creek Golf Course Board saw how a water quality and storm water improvement project could also benefit struggling wildlife. The Sugar Creek Golf Course Restoration Project added acres of new natural areas to the course, providing food and shelter for birds, butterflies, bumble bees and other wildlife.

Elmhurst Park District and the Village of Villa Park received the 2024 Jane Foulser Habitat Award for demonstrating that golf courses and natural areas can thrive together.

People are the best hope for turning around the declining populations of birds and pollinating insects. The first step is getting them outside and connected with nature. Anna Bakker, Outdoor Lab/Prairie Manager for the College of DuPage Natural Areas offers students and community members many fun ways of learning about native plants and hands-on opportunities for taking care of Illinois's vanishing wetlands and prairies.

Anna Bakker received the 2024 Pat Miller Community Engagement Award for the diverse programs and her extensive engagement with the community about prairies, wetlands and the plants and animals that live there.

The Pollinator Protector of the Year goes to an organization or person that actively seeks out or creates their own opportunities to be involved with pollinator protection. Mary Onorad is that kind of person.

Mary is a gardener but she didn't know about native plants or milkweed when she learned monarch butterflies were declining. She's a quick study and soon found herself in charge of improving a local bioswale. She jumped at the chance to help publicize Rotary International's 60,000 Tree Challenge, a fundraiser to purchase trees for the monarchs winter home in Mexico. Next Mary volunteered to be the chair of Rotary District 6450's Environmental Service Projects, a position that oversees processing applications for environmental projects. In her first year as chair, six pollinator-friendly projects received funding with four located in DuPage County.

Mary Onorad received the 2024 Pollinator Protector of the Year Award.



Kevin Goss
Superintendent Sugar Creek Golf Course



Anna Bakker
Outdoor Lab/Prairie Manager College of DuPage



Mary Onorad
Pollinator Protector of the Year
with Connie Schmidt

Are We Saving the Wrong Bee?

People are surprised when they learn there are hundreds of different bees. In Illinois alone there are over 400 species. But one bee stands out - the honey bee. It's a favorite because it produces sweet honey. The honey bee's popularity grew when colony collapse was picked up by the press in 2006. What the press failed to report was that honey bees are a managed species with an entire industry attending to their health problems. They do not fend for themselves and aren't endangered. Native bees are.

Honey bees are important pollinators of food crops but they aren't the only pollinator. Native bees also play a significant role in pollinating fruits and vegetables. For some crops, like tomatoes, they are the primary pollinator. Native bees have been evolving with native plants for thousands of years while honey bees are relative newcomers. Native bees are the pollinators keeping ecosystems healthy.

Honey bees and native bees need the same things, food and shelter. Beekeepers provide safe places where their bees are protected from the weather and can raise their young. Native bees need to find shelter in landscapes that continue to dwindle as more land is repurposed for urban development and agriculture. Agricultural land and residential yards and gardens are often sprayed with insecticides making them unhealthy places for insects. Developed land is paved and fragmented by roads carrying fast moving vehicles which pose a threat to bees and butterflies.

Both honey bees and native bees need the same food, nectar and pollen. Unlike most other livestock animals, beekeepers aren't required to supply food for their bees. The 30,000 to 40,000 bees in a single hive are left to find their own food, competing with native bees for the already limited supply of nectar and pollen. The number of hives in Illinois has been increasing since 2006 when more people decided to become a beekeeper and help honey bees.

Beekeepers in Illinois are required by the Department of Agriculture to register their beehives because honey bees are classified as an agricultural animal. One estimate puts the rate of under reporting at 90%. The true number of hives in DuPage County is unknown.

The amount of pollinator habitat available in the county is also unknown. It is unlikely that sufficient habitat is currently available to support healthy populations of both honey bees and native bees.

The county's GIS staff has undertaken a project that is a step toward finding a balance between hobbyist beekeepers and the needs of native bees. They are mapping the habitat that currently exists in the county. When the habitat map is finalized, it can be used by decision makers to determine the best locations for new natural areas.

It can also be used to determine if there is enough food within the foraging range of each beehive. Beekeepers will be better equipped to ensure that their bees have the food that they need.

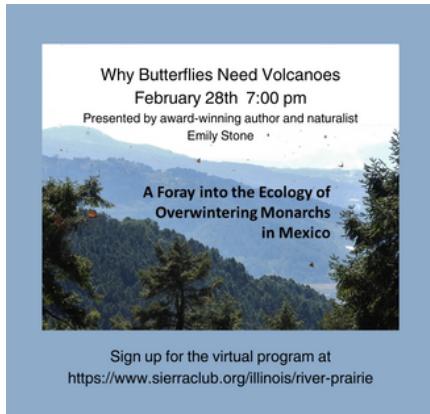


Bumble bee and honey bee foraging on blue vervain

Community Engagement

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature.
It will never fail you.

Frank Lloyd Wright



Top: 1 to r Announcement for *Why Butterflies Need Volcanoes* a virtual program presented by Emily Stone, Naturalist and Director of Education, Cable Natural History Museum; photo by Emily Stone of a monarch cluster in Mexico; DMP volunteers are available for answering questions at the *Forest Preserve District's Annual Native Plant Sale*

Bottom: 1 to r A guided hike at Bluff Spring Fen sponsored by the River Prairie Group was a Pollinator Week activity; the DMP table at *Monarch Soul* performed by the Chicago Sinfonietta; DMP educators Jill Speelman and Kim White provide programs and classes about monarchs for libraries, community events and the DuPage Forest Preserve District



Photo Credits

Cover	Bumble bee on coneflower	Jon Yeater
p. 5	Kevin Goss, Superintendent, Sugar Creek Golf Course Anna Bakker, Mary Onorad & Connie Schmidt	Connie Schmidt
p. 6	Bumble Bee and honey bee on blue vervain	Lonnie Morris
p. 7	Why Butterflies Need Volcanoes - announcement Monarch Cluster in Mexico DuPage Forest Preserve Native Plant Sale Bluff Spring Fen Hike DMP Table at Monarch Soul Kim White showing monarch chrysalids	Lonnie Morris Lonnie Morris Emily Stone DuPage Forest Preserve District Steve Turner Jill Spealman Lonnie Morris

