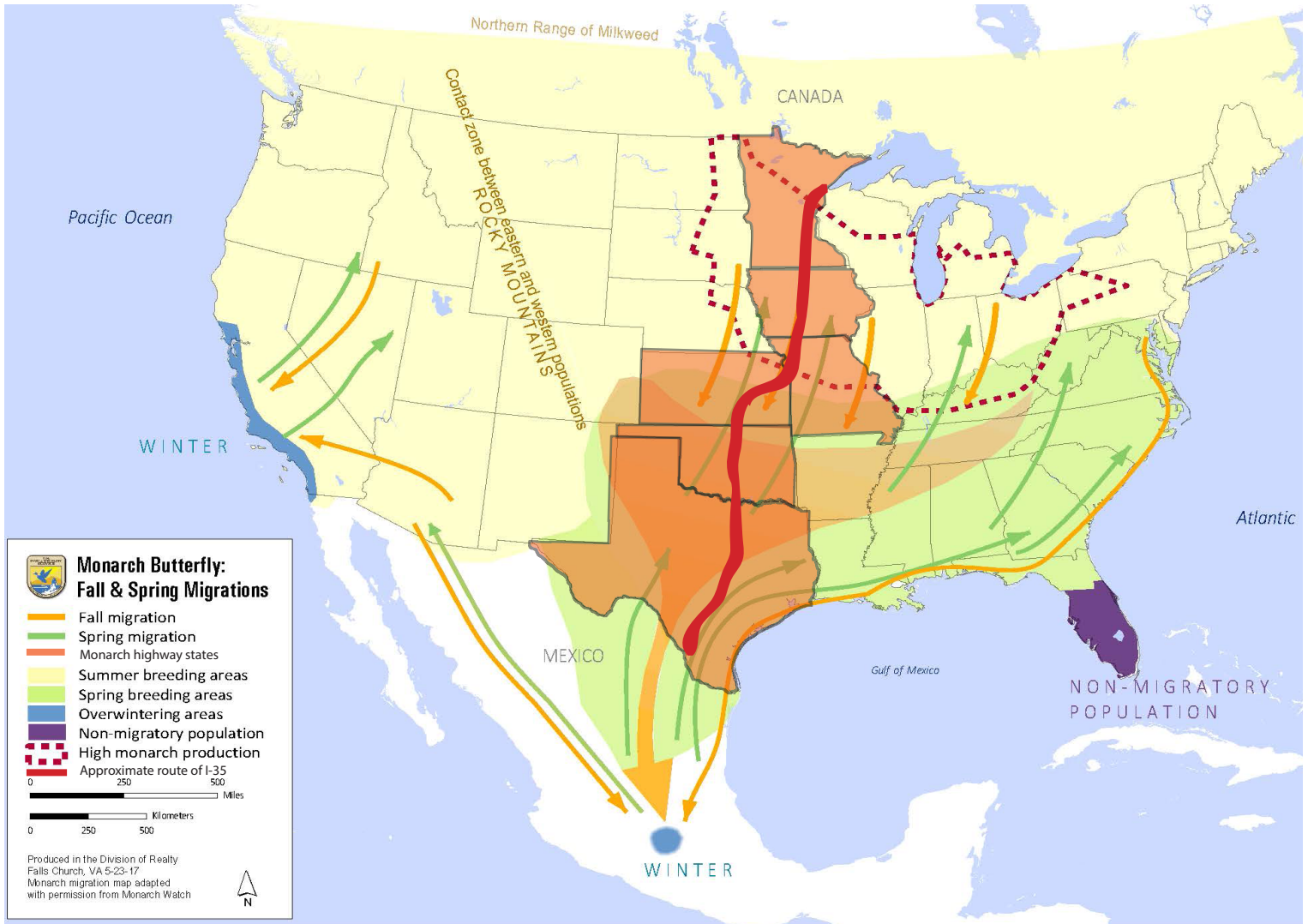


The Monarch Highway

monarchjointventure.org/monarch-highway

What is the Monarch Highway and how did it come to be?

The “Monarch Highway” is a symbolic migration corridor that follows Interstate-35 (I-35) from Laredo, Texas, to Duluth, Minnesota, aligning with the central flyway of the eastern migratory population of the monarch butterfly. The symbolic highway is a partnership effort bringing people together to catalyze conservation actions throughout the central flyway where monarchs need it most! However, in order to bring back the monarchs from their dramatic decline, conservation efforts are needed from everyone throughout the entire monarch range.



Who is Involved with the Monarch Highway?

In 2016, I-35 was identified the “Monarch Highway” by the State Departments of Transportation in the central flyway, including Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. However, the effort to conserve monarch butterfly habitat in this corridor extends beyond the roadsides managed by these DOTs. The conservation activities of the agencies, companies, non-profits, and individuals who own and manage land within the corridor can contribute to a network of connected habitat across the landscape for monarchs. Recognizing that restoring habitat across North America is important in supporting monarch butterflies, the Monarch Highway runs through the central part of the nation encompassing extremely important breeding habitat as well as the area through which both spring and fall migrations funnel.

Looking for more information? Visit monarchjointventure.org/monarch-highway to learn more and get involved!

Why is Monarch Conservation Important?

Monarchs make an excellent flagship species for pollinator and native plant conservation. Creating habitat for monarchs by planting diverse, native nectar plants and milkweed also creates habitat for other pollinators which we rely on for pollination services in agricultural and natural settings. Conserving pollinators and their habitat has positive cascading effects leading to conservation of other animals like songbirds and mammals. This pays dividends toward the health of our natural and managed habitats, paving a future for our own species.



What Can I Do to Help?

The most important action you can take to benefit monarchs and other pollinators is to create or improve habitat that contains native milkweed and wildflowers and develop a long-term maintenance plan for those habitats. Contribute to the Monarch Highway by working with partners to create habitat in your backyard, in marginal weedy areas, at community gardens, on public lands, along utility or transportation rights of way, at schools, on corporate campuses, and just about anywhere else you can think of; if you are interested in enhancing land you do not own, please secure the necessary permissions from the entity that owns it. Milkweeds are essential host plants for monarch caterpillars.

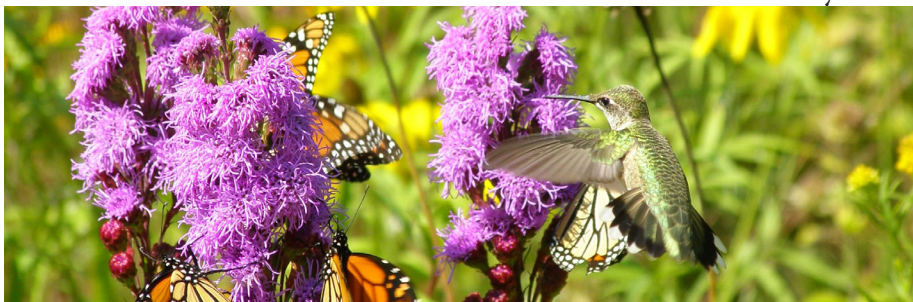


First, protect and improve existing habitat areas with appropriately timed management, like mowing, burning, or grazing, to promote native plant growth. In addition, you might consider adding native plant plugs or re-seeding a smaller area to help improve plant diversity. You may also identify areas that could be transformed into new habitats like lawns, edges, or other corridors on your property. Once a site is prepared for planting by eradicating the existing weedy vegetation, plugs and/or diverse seed mixes can be planted in either the spring or the fall. Native plantings also have low long-term maintenance costs and provide other environmental benefits like water filtration and erosion control.

Your feedback to state and local land management agencies, including DOTs, is encouraged to help support their efforts to expand monarch habitat conservation at roadsides, rest areas and other public land. Your vocal support of these efforts is critical to their work to improve and maintain areas for pollinators on public lands.

What are the Benefits of Managing for Monarchs?

Managing lands and gardening for monarchs can reduce vegetation management costs, save time, and beautify the landscape. Native landscaping reduces mowing needs and associated costs; controls public safety hazards like soil erosion, snow drifting, and flooding; improves groundwater recharge and water quality; and diversifies our plant and animal communities to form more sustainable and resilient ecosystems.



Wildflowers for Monarchs

Wildflowers that provide nectar are critical for adult butterflies.

Together with milkweed, this habitat provides monarchs with breeding resources, resting and refueling stops during migration, as well as nourishment to survive overwintering. Diverse habitat filled with wildflowers and milkweed supports not only monarchs but also native bees and other pollinators.