HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter

Wildlife Austin
City of Austin
Parks and Recreation
919 W. 28 1/2 St.
Austin, TX 78705
(512) 978-2606
wildlife@austintexas.gov

UPCOMING :

Alderbrook Habiturf & Wildflower Installation Care

April 19 2015 9:00am to 11:00 am Alderbrook Pocket Park | To register and form more information please visit **:** http://www.austinparks.org/calendar.html?eventkey=935

Wildfire Symposium

J. J. Pickle Research Campus, The University of Texas at Austin
North Burnet Austin, TX 78758
May 2 2015 9am-3pm
To register and for more information visit: http://www.eventbrite.com/e/wildfire-survivial-symposium-tickets-15695656130

Austin Earth Day Festival 2015!

Sat, 04/18/2015 - 12:00pm - 6:00pm
The Historic Browning Hangar at Mueller 4550 Mueller Central Dr.
Austin , TX 78723
For more information visit: http://earthdayaustin.com/

April 2015

Happy Spring!

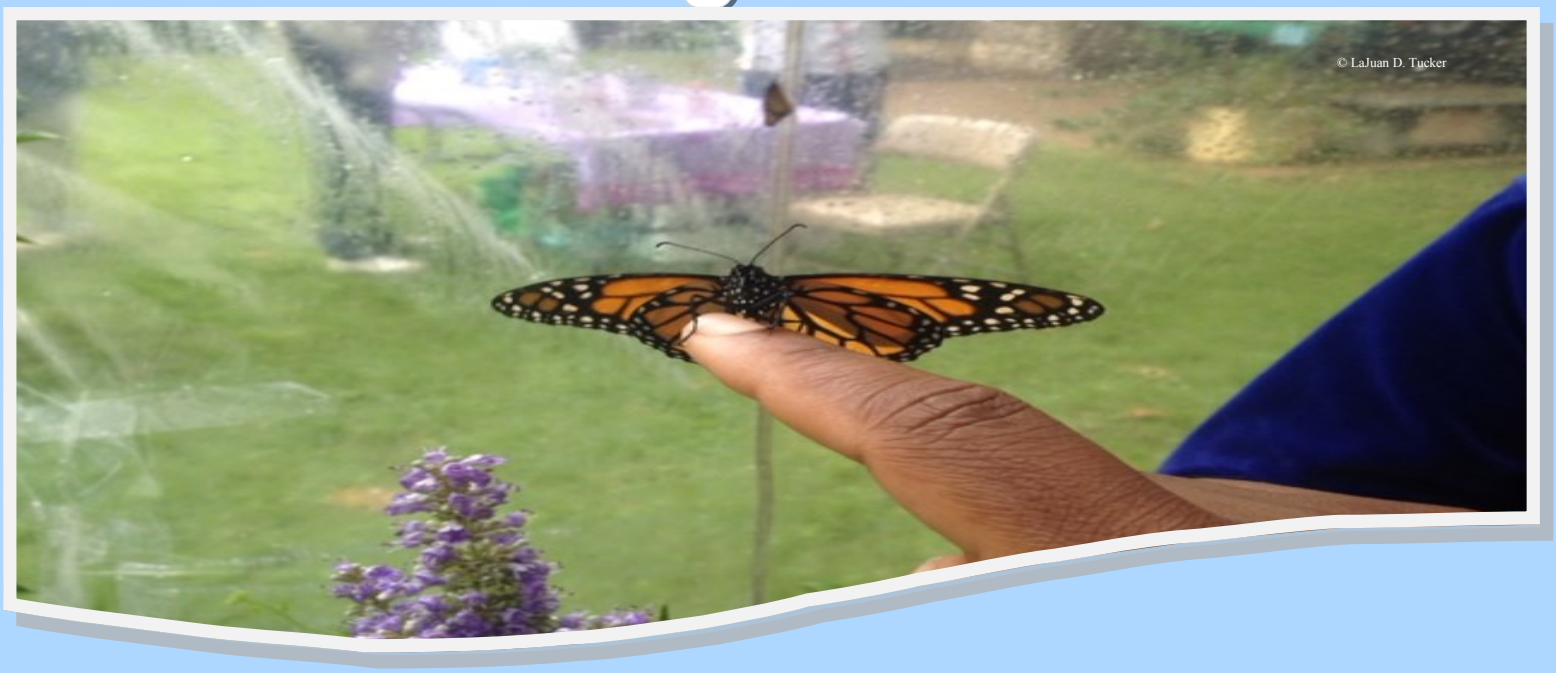
Now that Austin has been designated the # 1 City for Wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation and Wildlife Austin are partnering to increase the awareness of pollinators in the Austin area. Although they often go unseen, pollinators perform an extremely important service . It is estimated that pollinators provide 30%b of the fruits and vegetables that we eat. In celebration of NWF's designation, we are going to show case Austin's wildlife in all their glory. We will also take a deeper look at Monarch butterflies and why they are so special. I hope you enjoy this issue of the Habitat

In This Issue...

Would you like to receive the newsletter?

E-mail us at
wildlife@austintexas.gov

Living In a WUI



This past February the United States Fish and Wildlife Services and National Wildlife Federation launched a new campaign to save the declining monarch butterfly. "The Service signed a cooperative agreement with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), announced a major new funding initiative with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and pledged an additional $2 million in immediate funding for on-the-ground conservation projects around the country." With an increase focus on the monarch butterfly, lets take a look at some of the characteristic that make this creature so special and why Austin Texas is in a unique position to assist NWF and USFWS in the campaign to increase monarch butterfly numbers.

Monarch butterflies (Danaus plexippus) are among the most well known of the Lepidoptera order of insects. The monarch butterfly is most famous for two main characteristics: the species' long migrations and its aposematic coloration it uses to ward off predation. Even though the monarch is well known, researches show that overall monarch numbers are on the decline. Here in Austin we encounter the monarch butterfly in both its northern and southern migratory routes. This places Austin in a unique position to assist with conservation efforts which aim to preserve habitat essentials, eliminate excessive predators and hazards and educate our community about the threats posed to pollinators in general, and monarchs specifically.

Living In a WUI

The monarch butterfly's journey is well documented in NOVA's *Journey of the Butterflies*. This tiny weight no more than .27 to.75 grams starts off as a tiny egg laid by a female monarch. Monarchs lay their only on milkweed. By depositing eggs on the milkweed plant, female monarch give their offspring a food sources, once hatched, that once ingested will render larva repugnant to most predators. Milkweed contains cardiac glycosides (also referred to as cardenolides). Once the deposited eggs hatch, the larva (caterpillars) begin to eat the milkweed and sequester the cardenolides contained within the milkweed. This substance is poisons to most vertebrates and limits the monarchs susceptibility to predation by vertebrates. The bright orange and black coloration the butterfly has after metamorphosis—as opposed a camouflage appearance—advertises to predators their poisonous nature.

In while in the larval stage the monarch caterpillar , takes on the coloration of its host plant blending in with beautify bands of green, yellow, white and black. In the larval stage monarchs will molt several times as they grow and each stage in between molting is called an instar monarch's go through 5 instar phases as a larva, each in preparation of its final miraculous change that takes place in the chrysalis. After its final instar, the caterpillar will begin its preparation for pupation. Most monarchs will stay in pupation from 9-15 days depending on temperatures. When the wing muscles have emerged the chrysalis turns clear exposing the aposematic coloration that the monarch butterfly is famed.

Once freed from the chrysalis the monarch fuses its proboscis , which it will use to suck nectar from flowers, and waits for its wings to dry. Depending on the location of the monarch, if it is located in North America, that generation will begin a journey of around 3,000 miles southward to its overwintering locations in California, Mexico and other southwestern states. How the monarch butterfly makes such a tremendous journey is still a mystery. Some believe that Earth's magnetic fields assist the monarch in navigation. Others believe that the angle of the sun during the seasons give clues to these creatures, directing their flight southwards.

Once they arrive at their overwintering location, North America' s monarch butterfly waits for the weather to warm before the next generation will make the journey back north.

Living In a WUI

Although a single generation will make the 3,000 mile fight south, the journey back northward is made by four successive generations. Austin stands in the bottle neck of the monarch's flight path. Both northern and southern bound monarch's use Texas as a flyway to in and out of Mexico. Because of our unique location in the monarch's flight path, residents have a unique stewards ship opportunity to provide the critical needs to monarchs in order to make their spectacular journey. Here are a list of actives we can do to assist in monarch preservation:

Provide habitat essentials: Food, Water, Shelter and a place to raise young in your parks, yards and open spaces.

* Provide a consistent water sources
* Provide native milkweed for the monarch larval stage

  Antelope Horn (*Asclepias asperula*) and

  Green Milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*)
* Plant native butterfly friendly flowers that provide nectar sources for adult butterfly

Eliminate unnecessary predators and dangers

* Supervise pets and children when outdoors to ensure they do not harm wildlife visitors
* Control imported fire ant populations in your yard. Fire ants are shown to be a large predator of monarch eggs and larva
* Eliminate uses pesticides sparingly or eliminated them all together. These harmful chemicals are thought to have a negative effect on both milkweed and the butterflies themselves.

References: Oberhauser Karen S. and Michelle J Solensky ed. *The Monarch Butterfly: Biology and Conservation* . New York: Cornell University Press. 2004. Print

Photo Contest Winners

In celebration of NWF's designation of Austin Texas as the #1 City for Wildlife. We challenged Habitat Stewards to capture the beauty of Austin's Wildlife. We received several submission and it was difficult to choose a first and second place winner. We would like to thank all who submitted photos to the challenge and we hope you keep up the amazing photos. First and second place winners, won Wildlife Austin hats, tickets to Zilker Garden Fest and a host of other amazing prices. First place winners won an additional garden trowel and garden shears, just in time for the planting season. Enjoy the amazing submissions!

This photo won first place, taken by Jim and Lynne Weber at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Showcased here is a small green from the Halictidae family on a "Black–Eyed Susan" (*Rudbeckia hirta*). What we admire most about this photo, is the color and detail. This been is certainly a pollinator in action! Notice the deep yellow pollen that covers this metallic bee. Thanks Jim and Lynne for your submission and taking the time to show off the hard work of this pollinator

Park Ranger LaJuan D. Tucker

School Yard Habitat Update

Donations and volunteers needed!

Campuses are looking for donations of the following materials for fall workdays:

Compost and/or soil
Native seeds, plants, shrubs and trees
Tools
4 inch pots
Limestone blocks
Cedar logs
Decomposed Granite
Bird Feeders and/or bird seed

Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!

For more upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact:

Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist amuller@austinisd.org or 841-5070