



Western Monarch & Native Insect Pollinator Working Group

# Keep Western Monarchs Wild

*Advancing Collaborative, Proactive, Science-Based Fish and Wildlife Conservation and Management Across the West*



Source: Project Monarch Health

*As western monarchs continue to experience steep decline, the question of captive rearing has been raised as a potential solution to amplify the population. This approach is not currently recommended by conservation experts because of the potential impacts it may have on the health and natural distribution of the wild monarch population.<sup>8</sup> Currently WAFWA's Western Monarch Conservation Plan does not include captive rearing as a conservation strategy.*

## Captive rearing by the public is not a viable conservation strategy

### Captive rearing increases risks to monarchs

Captive rearing poses the risk of transmitting disease between caterpillars raised in higher densities than they would occur in the wild using materials that may have accumulated parasites and pathogens.<sup>1</sup> While disease and predation are natural parts of the monarch life cycle, it is possible to unintentionally infect multiple generations of caterpillars through the repeated use of rearing containers and materials. Infected individuals released into the wild may increase the incidence of disease in the wild population and cause lower survival and migration success.<sup>2</sup>

The loss of genetic diversity is a concerning impact of releasing captive-bred individuals into the wild, and even slight adaptations to captivity can be inherited by later generations.<sup>9</sup> Non-natural rearing conditions can influence monarchs' wing color and shape, which may have consequences for breeding and migration success.<sup>4</sup>



Credit: H. Brenegan

# Emphasize Effective Methods

## Check whether captive rearing is allowed in your state

Depending on where you live, handling monarch butterflies for any purpose may be limited.<sup>3</sup> Wildlife agencies in the states that comprise the core of the western range have varying legal authority to manage native insect species, including monarch butterflies. Before attempting to collect wild monarchs, check with your state and local wildlife agencies for information and resources on management authority.

## Get involved in other actions that benefit monarchs

The WAFWA Western Monarch Conservation Plan emphasizes the importance of available native habitat and encourages efforts that increase native milkweed and nectar resources on the landscape as well as in urban gardens and landscaping. Your support of actions to preserve and restore habitat is essential to provide a safer landscape for monarch butterflies to recover their numbers.<sup>6</sup>

*Monarch Habitat Restoration in Northeastern Utah*



The Western Monarch Conservation Plan also recognizes the important contributions community scientists have made to monarch conservation. You can contribute valuable data used by Fish and Wildlife agencies by participating in community science initiatives. For more information, please see our “Monarch Community Science” fact sheet.

## References

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