

Western Monarch Mystery Challenge

Project Summary

Western monarchs are at less than 1% of their population size in the 1980's and the situation is alarming. The **Western Monarch Mystery Challenge** is a campaign to find out where western monarch butterflies are in early spring. We know they spend the winter months (November to February) in groves along the California Coast, and start breeding in central California in May, and in some cases, as early as February. However, we know a lot less about where they are and what they're up to in February, March, and April. Solving the mystery of where western monarchs spend the spring is central to conserving and restoring the phenomenon of monarch migration in the West.

How to participate is simple:

- 1.) If you see a monarch outside of overwintering groves, take a picture! (don't worry, it can be far away and blurry)
- 2.) Report it to iNaturalist (the app is free) and include date, species, and location OR email it to MonarchMystery@wsu.edu
- 3.) Be automatically entered to win a variety of prizes every week you report a sighting

Sample Photo:



Original photo taken from far away to avoid scaring the monarch



The photo below is a closeup of the monarch from the original photo. It is blurry, but clear enough that we can tell that it has the right species of butterfly

If you upload a monarch photo - from outside the overwintering sites - you will be automatically entered in a weekly prize drawing. We will choose winners every week from Valentine's Day (Feb. 14) to Earth Day (April 22). Prizes will range from gift cards to REI or Patagonia to other goodies.

By reporting an observation, you will be adding to our community science program, the Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper, a great way to see our knowledge of western monarch grow.

Here's how the entry process works:

- Each photo is an entry. So if you submit 3 photos in a week, that is 3 entries for the prize that week.
- Each week you are eligible for new prizes, even if you submitted sightings and won prizes the week before. (No duplicates of the same monarch in the same place in the same week)

If you want to participate but do not see a monarch, you can be entered to win prizes by becoming a monarch ambassador. **To be an ambassador:**

- 1.) Share the Western Monarch Mystery Challenge on social media
- 2.) Use **#monarchmystery** and tag our accounts listed below
- 3.) OR be a neighborhood ambassador through NextDoor - anywhere in California, particularly in the coast range and Central Valley where we suspect monarchs are most active in the spring.

*Please do not submit sightings from monarch rearing projects. They skew data and could jeopardize the quality and legitimacy of conservation plans. Only “wild” monarchs are to be reported.

Media accounts, hashtags, and contacts:

(bolded hashtags are necessary)

Facebook: @monarchmystery

Instagram: @westernmonarchmystery

Twitter: @wmonarchmystery

#monarchmystery #citizenscience #citsci #communityscience #westernmonarchs #savethemonarchs #savemonarchs #savetheplanet #science #nature #climatechange

Please direct questions to:

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