

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Monarch Conservation Initiative

While monarch butterflies are found across the United States — as recently as 1996 numbering some 1 billion — their numbers have declined by approximately 90 percent in recent years, a result of numerous threats.

Recently, the Fish and Wildlife Service joined the National Wildlife Federation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in launching a campaign aimed at saving the declining butterfly. A significant part of the effort is simply to engage people to protect and restore monarch habitat here in the United States — especially planting native milkweed and nectar plants, the butterfly's primary food sources in breeding and migration habitats.

The new Monarch Conservation Fund was kick-started by an injection of \$1.2 million from the Fish and Wildlife Service that will be matched by private and public donors. The fund will provide the first dedicated source of funding for projects working to conserve monarchs.

This year, the Service is also funding \$2 million worth of projects to restore and enhance more than 200,000 acres of monarch habitat while supporting over 750 schoolyard habitats and pollinator gardens.

The monarch serves as an indicator of the health of pollinators and the American landscape. Conserving and connecting habitat for monarchs will benefit other plants, animals and important insect and bird pollinators.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.