

Monarch Butterfly Conservation in Mexico

Lemelin, R. H., & Jaramillo-López, P. F. (2020). Orange, black, and a little bit of white is the new shade of conservation: the role of tourism in Monarch Butterfly Conservation in Mexico. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 19(4), 291-303.

History

Monarch butterfly migration represents one of the world's greatest migrations, and involves passing over 3000 km across the North American continent. The monarch butterfly is a large butterfly, easily recognizable with its black and orange wings and pattern of white spots. It has been identified as an iconic pollinator and a charismatic micro-fauna species.

Threats

The primary threat to the monarch butterfly is the reduction of breeding habitat in Canada and the United States. Other urgent threats are the use of herbicide in farming, deforestation, and degradation of forest by illegal logging of overwintering sites in Mexico. Changes in the microclimate, due to factors such as the respiration and body heat of the visitors can negatively affect the population of butterflies and the soil which is eroding from the extensive use of the tourist's footpaths. Due to the differing opinions on the benefits of this type of tourism, including local economic benefits, damages and disturbances continue to persist while the potential for increased local economic gain is not fully realized.

Recovery Plan

There are seven suggestions for a recovery plan. One, by developing a code of conduct for visitors, detailing which visitor behaviors are acceptable and which are not. Two, by installing improved signage throughout sanctuaries. Three, by developing a complete forest ecosystem restoration strategy that focuses on natural regeneration first. Four, by informing visitors how they can become engaged. Five, by implementing a guiding certification process. Six, by integrating visitor management frameworks within the larger management plans. Seven, by developing a regional tourism strategy taking into account the various needs and expectations of visitors.

Tourism Location

Monarch butterflies can be found in Spain, Australia, Colombia, Ecuador, Hawaii, and New Zealand. This distribution is mostly associated with their spring and fall migration. Sierra Chincua is the second most visited sanctuary after El Rosario in Mexico, while Piedra Herrada is another accessible site.