



SUCCESS STORIES

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Plant It and They Will Come

Monarch caterpillars and chrysalis are found on milkweeds planted in native prairie and pollinator gardens at the Wayne NF office in Nelsonville, Ohio.



Monarch caterpillar and chrysalis found at Wayne National Forest office.

While maintaining newly planted prairie and pollinator gardens at the Nelsonville office, students Nick Galentin and Edward Entsminger came across some new visitors. These visitors were not of the two-legged form, but instead multi-legged variants eating milkweed leaves.

The question "who's been eating the milkweeds?" was quickly followed by a "Wow, look at that!" A large caterpillar was gorging himself on the new plants. The distinct yellow, black and white stripes left no doubt that monarchs had found the new native plantings. As the day continued more caterpillars were found, along with several chrysalis.

Monarchs lay small eggs on individual milkweed plants. The hatched larva consume milkweed leaves and grow rapidly, sometimes shedding their skin five times. The larvae then transform into a chrysalis that is green in color with gold markings. As the pupa transforms the chrysalis becomes clear and a monarch butterfly emerges. These butterflies live about 2-5 weeks to mate and lay more eggs. The last generation of the year migrates south to overwinter in warm, sunny Mexico. In spring, they lay eggs on milkweeds and the monarch march northward to the United States starts all over again.

The monarchs have come to the Nelsonville office in response to native plantings that have occurred in 2006 and 2007. Many of the milkweeds were planted as part of a Stewardship project that salvages native plants from a

future highway project. The salvaged plants have been incorporated into native flower beds, a native prairie, and most recently: two pollinator gardens. Rural Action worked with Wayne National Forest, Hocking College and ODOT to make the plant salvages possible. Likewise, Harold Blazier, greenhouse manager at Ohio University, had propagation classes grow milkweeds from seed provided to him by Forest Botanist Cheryl Coon. These milkweeds and other nectar providing plants were planted in the pollinator gardens throughout the summer.

For more information contact Cheryl Coon at 740-753-0558