

# MONARCH BUTTERFLY

*Danaus plexippus*



**ID TIPS** Large in size for a butterfly, bright orange with white spots and black lines. Only other species in NC of similar characteristics is the viceroy butterfly.

The caterpillar can be identified by the black, white, and yellow evenly spaced striping with two black “tentacles” on each end of the body.

**HABITAT** Open grasslands

**HOST PLANT** Milkweeds (*Asclepias*).

**BREEDING** Monarchs typically begin laying eggs in NC beginning in April, first emerging in May. Different generations of Monarchs will continue laying eggs throughout the summer.

**FOOD** Caterpillars only feed on milkweeds, however once they become butterflies they will feed on nectar from many species of flowering plants.

## ACTIVITIES & STRATEGIES

Promote existing flowering plants, including milkweed, by keeping the area open with mowing, disking, and prescribed fire.

Plan for a diverse offering of native plants with varied bloom times and structure (flowers, grass, shrubs, and trees) to benefit other native pollinators too. Plant or seed if needed.

Remove invasives that reduce habitat quality.

**EXAMPLE SCENARIO** Thin forest stand and burn on a two-year rotation. Broadcast pollinator seed mix in canopy gaps and edges.

**TIMING** Vary the season and severity of prescribed fires to minimize any negative impacts to the diverse life cycles of pollinators.

## CONSERVATION STATUS

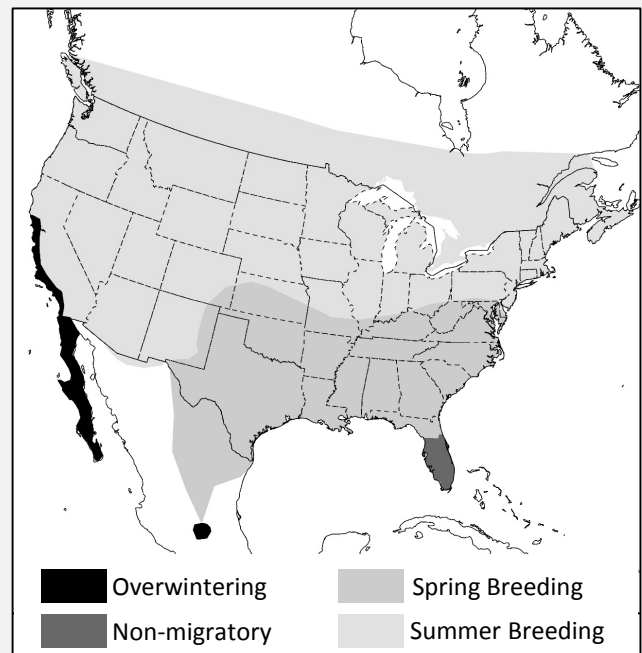
Federal at-risk species

## FOREST USE AT A GLANCE

Herbaceous groundcover

## SPECIES RANGE

The Eastern Monarch population is primarily found east of the Rocky Mountains and overwinters in a small area of Mexico.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The monarch butterfly will feed, fly, and reproduce throughout the U.S. and southern Canada for several generations in a single year. The fourth generation migrates south in fall.