

[Cars](#) | [Auto Financing](#) | [Event Tickets](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Online Degrees](#) | [Business Opportunities](#) | [Shopping](#)

Search

How do I find it?

[Subscribe to paper](#)

Do you know your Credit Score? See it for \$0!				FreeScore.com.	
Excellent	750 - 840	Fair	620 - 659	I Don't Know	????
Good	660 - 749	Poor	340 - 619	Find out INSTANTLY!	



[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Travel](#) | [Money](#) | [Sports](#) | [Life](#) | [Tech](#) | [Weather](#)

Become a member of the USA TODAY community now!
[Log in](#) | [Become a member](#)
 What's this?



Technology » Science & Space [Shop for Gadgets](#)

Monarch butterflies, battered by the weather, no longer rule

Updated 19h 14m ago | [Comment](#) | [Recommend](#)

[E-mail](#) | [Save](#) | [Print](#) | [Reprints & Permissions](#) | [RSS](#)

By **Elizabeth Weise, USA TODAY**

Share

[Yahoo! Buzz](#)

[Add to Mixx](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[More](#)

This year may be one of the worst on record for the beleaguered monarch butterfly, experts say.

Massive hailstorms that dropped 2 inches of ice on the trees where the orange-and-black-winged butterflies spend the winter in Mexico, followed by 15 inches of rain, could mean that as many as 50% were killed this year.

"My fear is that the number was much higher than that," says [Chip Taylor](#), a professor of entomology and director of Monarch Watch at the University of Kansas-Lawrence. "And that's from a population that was pretty small to begin with." He believes it may take several years for the population to recover.

The area northwest of Mexico City where the winged creatures gather was hit hard by the severe weather. "Fifty people died in the area," Taylor says.

Says Lincoln Brower, a zoologist and monarch specialist at Sweet Briar College in Virginia, "I was down there about 10 days ago, and things are in pretty bad shape."

The monarch population is typically measured by the number of acres of pine trees the butterflies fill. This year, scientists found the smallest area of monarchs overwintering in the 16 years they have been looking — down to 4.7 acres from an average of 18.3 acres, Taylor says.

Brower inspected one of the principal colonies, which had been 1.2 acres in size. "All we found was two trees with butterflies in them."

Each female flies 1,000 miles or more on her way north from Mexico, depositing her eggs along the way only on milkweed leaves. She dies, but her eggs hatch and her offspring continue the migration.

It can take three to four generations for the monarchs to reach Canada, Taylor says. Then in the fall, that final generation begins its migration back to Mexico, and those butterflies live for eight months.

"It's one of the mysteries scientists are still working on," says Craig Wilson, a butterfly follower and science educator at Texas A&M University in College Station.

Monarch populations have fallen dramatically because of three things, says Brower, one of the world experts on the species:

- Illegal logging in Mexico has destroyed the butterflies' mountain habitats.

- Climate change is causing severe weather.



Enlarge By Chip Taylor, Science

Monarch butterflies migrate to Mexico every fall.

FLIGHT OF THE MONARCH

Monarchs are the only butterflies that make long, two-way migrations every year. Unable to survive cold winters, they either head in the fall to groves along the California coast or to mountain forests in Mexico.

- **Mid March:** Leave Mexico
- **Northward migration until June:** In the trip north in the spring, females fly 1,000 miles or more, lay eggs and die off, and then their children continue the journey north.
- **Southward migration starting late August or September:** Ultimately, a third or fourth generation of their offspring makes the return trip all the way to Mexico or California in the fall.
- **November:** Arrival in Mexico

Source: Chip Taylor, Monarch Watch, University of Kansas.

BUTTERFLY LINKS

[Monarch Butterfly Fund](#) | [Journey North](#) | [Monarch Watch](#)

- There has been a significant increase in the planting of corn and soybeans in the Midwest genetically engineered to be herbicide-resistant. That allows farmers to spray weed killer without hurting the crops, but it has meant almost no milkweed survive in the fields.

Featured video



Weather

Northeast braces for 'life-threatening' flooding.

Juarez

Arrest made in killings of Americans in Mexico.

Celebrities

Updates on Ricky Martin, Chaz Bono, Hatcher.

[More: Video](#)

One million reasons.
 The Reader™ Store gives you access to twice as many eBooks as the Kindle Store.
[LEARN MORE →](#)

USA TODAY Tech E-mail Newsletters

Sign up to get:

- Product Reviews
- Science and Space
- Hot trends from industry experts and more



Sign Up Now

[What's This?](#)

Related Advertising Links

Hot Stock Alert - EVSO

Solar Power Your Portfolio With Evolution Solar...
www.EvolutionSolar.com

Fresno: Acai Berry EXPOSED

Reporter Discovers Shocking Truth. Will Acai Berry...
News6Report.com

"They've literally eliminated 100% of the milkweed of what once was prime breeding habitat of the butterflies," Brower says.

Monarch Watch has begun a milkweed-planting campaign to encourage the creation of monarch way stations across the nation.

Monarchs are beautiful, but creating habitats where they can thrive also benefits humans, Taylor says. Those habitats also "protect other insects, the little guys whose life's work is to pollinate our nuts, our fruits and our vegetables."

You might also be interested in:

[Homeowners balk as property tax bills stay high](#) (USATODAY.com in Money)

[Butterflies losing habitats due to climate](#) (USATODAY.com in Tech)

[Alaskans fear for their way of life](#) (USATODAY.com in News)

[Extreme dieting spreads in Asia](#) (USATODAY.com in News)

Selected for you by a sponsor:

[NASA: Millions of tons of water discovered on moon](#) (Computerworld)

[Yahoo! Buzz](#) [Mixx](#)

Posted 19h 56m ago

Updated 19h 15m ago

[E-mail](#) | [Save](#) | [Print](#) | [Reprints & Permissions](#) | [RSS](#)

To report corrections and clarifications, contact Standards Editor **Brent Jones**. For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to letters@usatoday.com. Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to corrections.usatoday.com.

Guidelines: You share in the USA TODAY community, so please keep your comments smart and civil. Don't attack other readers personally, and keep your language decent. Use the "Report Abuse" button to make a difference. [Read more.](#)

Sponsored Links

Hot Stock Alert - EVSO

Solar Power Your Portfolio With Evolution Solar. Invest. www.EvolutionSolar.com

Fresno: Acai Berry EXPOSED

Reporter Discovers Shocking Truth. Will Acai Berry Make You Lose Fat? News6Report.com

Why Penny Stocks Is the In Thing

Our subscribers are profiting 100% gains that's why. www.PennyPic.com

[Get listed here](#)

 351	 364	 382	Do You Know Your Credit Score? Click Here to See Yours! <small>FreeScore.com</small>
---	---	---	--

Newspaper Home Delivery - Subscribe Today

[Home](#) • [News](#) • [Travel](#) • [Money](#) • [Sports](#) • [Life](#) • [Tech](#) • [Weather](#)

About USATODAY.com: [Site Map](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Jobs with Us](#) | [Terms of Service](#)
[Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Right](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Press Room](#) | [Media Lounge](#) | [Reprints and Permissions](#)

News Your Way: [Mobile News](#) | [Email News](#) | [Add USATODAY.com RSS feeds](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Podcasts](#) | [Widgets](#)

Partners: [USA WEEKEND](#) | [Sports Weekly](#) | [Education](#) | [Space.com](#)

Copyright 2010 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.