

The 'Plight of the Monarch' and Wings of Change by Sandy Lindsay

April 21, 2016
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Feature



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Monarch message at Southampton Library attracts interested group

'Wings of Change' have come to Saugeen Shores and, given the recent talk by Kerry Jarvis and Melitta Smole at Southampton Library, it appears that more people are becoming interested in the 'plight of the Monarch butterfly'.

Jarvis and Smole, along with Stuart Nutt, are the driving force behind the recent local movement in Saugeen Shores to help reduce the decline in Monarch butterflies through the establishment of butterfly gardens/pods in the area.

According to Jarvis, butterflies and other 'pollinators' are at risk due to a range of adverse conditions including traffic, loss of habitat, insecticide use and many others. "We are establishing gardens that attract pollinators, such as the Monarch, and also trying to encourage homeowners to plant native species of plants for them."

The organization is considering several options to increase awareness of the Monarchs' plight.

One of the unique items is a 'Monarch cape' fashioned after a Point Pelee concept and designed by Lynne Russell.



Melitta Smole presents the newly created 'Monarch' cape



Kerry Jarvis and Melitta Smole answered questions about the Monarch and how to help



Melitta Smole demonstrates the method of 'tagging' monarchs

Monarch butterflies are also being 'tagged' whenever possible to track their migratory habits and numbers. Although it's a delicate process, it has become a way of detailing an increase or decrease in their numbers. Smole explains that, "The butterflies are tagged with small 'sticky' tags that contain the location and phone number so that anyone who finds one can identify and notify the destination of origin."

A date base is maintained at the University of Kansas where they maintain the tracking and also provide the stickers used.

The Monarch relies on one plant only to lay its eggs ... the 'Milkweed'. Unfortunately, post World War II when lawns came into vogue, the milkweed was seen as a 'weed' and it wasn't until recently that the Ontario government removed it from its noxious weed category and now it has become an encouraged plant to grow.



Student archivist Grace Dyer models the new 'Monarch' cape

"We are looking at different phases," says Jarvis, "with a focus on education. We are establishing 'The Pod Squad' where volunteers will be 'pod' ambassadors who look after each butterfly pod and monitor the plants. We are also working with organizations such as the Rail Trail and Explore the Bruce. "

For more information, visit:
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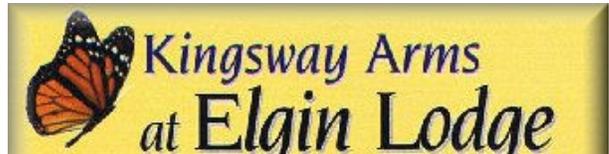
The Butterfly Gardens of Saugeen Shores group is volunteer driven and has received support from a number of community groups and organizations. The next phase of their project will include educational partnerships with the local elementary school and others.

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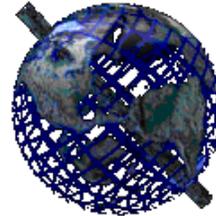


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Friday, April 22, 2016