

Editorial on the dupage of the Monarch Community at large and how they are being harvested for public funding.

This editorial is hard for me to encompass with words that don't include some epithets so I will write it down instead. The focus of this letter is to implicate Andy Davis and his Wife Sonia Altizer and possibly others of purposely hijacking the dialog on Monarch Science and lobbying for state funds with the end goal of taking the ability to handle nature from the public and sell it back to them in the form of controlled science (permitted citizen science) At first the idea seemed complicated but what I realized is that is was merely far reaching.

Most successful business ventures are long term plans.

That means the only way they could accomplish this is to take the rights away in the first place, such as in California where millions of dollars are to be allotted to their program and the people who loved raising Monarchs the most (and coincidentally also the richest ones) are in line for the coveted permits after two years of being unable to publicly share in their hobbies of hand rearing Monarch Butterflies. They hijacked a natural parasite and the propensity for all of these Monarch enthusiasts to use Tropical Milkweed and used these issues to leverage the laws to achieve their end desires.

And in the end they will be the recipients of grant monies from each state they're successful in for their "institute" If you will use history as your guide, over the last year all of the articles with Davis and Altizer (either or or both) were little studies done by interns. All of the articles were spread on online circuits and then the ones with the most hits were sold to magazines like Nat Geo.

Most of the savvy Monarch community can see right through some of these studies but the average person who comes into this with the mindset of saving something get most of their knowledge from these articles as they are fist to show up in many search engines, and not only that, they're ubiquitous across most websites who cut and paste stories for clicks.

Global Monarch scientists in general do not support the anti-tropical regime nor do they believe Monarch diseases are of major concern, yet they do not have big enough voices to cover the internet. There are thousands of Facebook pages and internet blogs and nurseries who make up a network of millions of people globally who are a part of the Monarch Butterfly "market" Some people try to earn a living growing milkweed and teaching about habitat like I do, and others go for the big bucks.

Public funding for science. So what's the big deal anyways? We want to solve these problems why not let them? Remember what I said about the "studies" and articles published about them? That's why. The science coming out of this institute is not corroborated outside of their inner circle of friends and the work is done by interns who are motivated by becoming famous for "breakthrough science discoveries" What I'd like to know is how much of their actual funding goes to administration.

Here's the facts of events as we know them: Claims of linkage to Tropical Milkweed and OE are unfounded. The lack of available native milkweeds to the general public made it easy to make this correlation at first, but now people are realizing that some of them have native milkweeds now and they are also seeing diseases where these diseases are heaviest. It is now understood that not only is it part of their natural cycle to have parasites but that cutting back milkweeds in fall and winter mating grounds is detrimental to the overall population of Monarchs that following season.

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Hand rearing Monarchs does not harm their population and is a fun hobby that is often a gateway into nature for students, adults and people who want to experience the act of taking care of something precious. There is actually no proof other than unfounded conjecture that hand rearing butterflies at home is harmful, and the fact that there are cleanliness, climate and food habitat concerns this is not different from keeping ANY animal at home.

Saying you can't hand rear butterflies because of lack of training won't stop there, they will be coming for your dogs and cats and fish and birds next. OE protozoans (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrta*) are parasites that use Monarch Butterflies as hosts. The main goal of a parasite is not to kill the host, but to use it as a means of survival and procreation.

Although any direct benefit provided to the Monarch is unknown, they can become overly infected during heavy breeding seasons and this wanes over the winter as mating monarchs spread the spores ever thinner amongst available host plants (and each other during mating) This organism is climate driven just like the Monarch is and the success of the parasite and the Monarch Butterfly are intertwined. And this is a global feature, not just in the Americas. We do not know of any Monarch populations globally that are being "wiped out" by OE and actual confirmed data points to fluctuating infection rates over time that reflect climate changes and host plant availability.

Less milkweed means more infection, not the other way around. Monarch migration is climate driven. It is not driven by host plant availability. Although typical Monarch habitat at large is considered healthy, nobody seems to think Monarch butterflies can exist without migrating once a year. This is not true and globally there are non-migratory Monarch populations, overwintering populations (like in California) and there is our original localized population that has adapted to the various climate regions of the continent.

And temperatures are rising! Scientists and citizens alike have been reporting winter breeding colonies of Monarchs all over California for years! And coincidentally these sightings directly correlate to the populations sleeping in the groves of the central coast. More Monarchs in the trees, less of them in the winter breeding sites. And vice versa. It's a true fact you can look it up but this information is not widely shared. Why?

Because we wouldn't be trying to "save the migration" anymore and the excuse for their funding goes away. The Monarch Butterfly is no more in danger than any other pollinator on earth and in fact there are other actual endangered butterflies in California that truly are at significant risk. How many of those can you name without using a search engine? Please read the first sentence of this paragraph one more time. Right now I can say that your state in the USA or territory in Canada is being lobbied to protect the Monarch and thus make it illegal to handle them.

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Then they will institute a tagging program in your state run by VOLUNTEERS (citizen science) and live very well while their free interns run the show. You will continue to see intern led studies being editorialized by the Davis and his friends (to add credibility) and many of you will slowly forget that we already had tagging programs led by scientists (in my state too)and the data is just sitting around.

They will take away your ability to touch a monarch caterpillar and then sell it back to you for your public funds and make you feel "special" to have been chosen for the program. One of the lucky few. Meanwhile everyone else including all of our students and other not so fortunate hobbyists whil; be afraid to publicly share in their joy of raising monarchs.

Eventually they will start to be so tired of social attacks they will retreat from the community and all of their years of knowledge gleaned through the loving act of raising butterflies will be lost. All of this taken away by people who actually don't even care about Monarchs at all.

For only one reason! Cold hard cash. How thoughtful are you about Monarchs?  
How about your tax dollars? How about the rights of our children to experience nature first hand through the mysteries of the caterpillar, chrysalis and transformation?

What about the future of our ecosystem and what that means for mankind?

2/2024 Kenneth Abernathy Caterpillar Chow

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