

Milkweed Seed Ball Activity

Goal: To learn about and help the local Species-At-Risk, the Eastern Monarch Butterfly.

Location: Anywhere with a flat surface.

Ages: Any age!

Materials:

- Flour
- Water
- Spoon
- Cup/ bowl
- Flat surface (suggest that a baking tray is used for easy clean up)

Introduction Questions:

Q. What is a pollinator?

A. A pollinator is an animal that transfers pollen between plants, allowing for the reproduction of more plants.

Q. Why are pollinators so important?

A. Pollinators are responsible for the survival of well over half of all plants, including those that we eat!

Q. What kind of pollinators do you know of?

A. Pollinators include butterflies, bees, ants, wasps, moths, flies, and hummingbirds. Monarch butterflies and Yellow-Banded bumblebees are two local pollinator Species-At-Risk.

Q. What does the life cycle of a Monarch butterfly look like?

A. Try to get the kids to work together, each saying a different part of the cycle if applicable.

The life cycle varies in length depending on the generation to which it belongs. Typically, the summer generations (typically between June and August) will last between 2-6 weeks each. The summer life cycle begins with an adult monarch laying eggs on a milkweed leaf. Once the egg hatches, they emerge as a larva (commonly

known as a caterpillar) that will feed on the milkweed plant. The larva forms a chrysalis, which is a hard shell sleeping bag that hangs off a branch and stays there while it transforms into a butterfly. The butterfly will then be able to pollinate flowers, such as milkweed.

Q. What do Monarch butterflies do during the cold weather?

A. Monarch butterflies migrate on an annual basis.

The eastern monarch will migrate from the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico into the northern United States and southern regions of Canada from Alberta to Nova Scotia during the months of May and June, this is referred to as their northern migration. It can take between 2 and 4 generations for monarchs to complete this migration. Around late summer and early fall, monarchs will begin their southward migration. This migration involves a single generation commonly known as the “super generation” which can live up to 7 months.

Q. Do you think it’s easy for Monarch butterflies to find milkweed

A. Monarch caterpillars are picky eaters; they only eat milkweed.

No, it’s not easy for them to find Milkweed. Milkweed loss due to housing development and agriculture led to a significant decline in the monarch butterfly population. Monarch populations have declined by over 90%.

Activity:

****For younger children, make sure to give an example ahead of time to demonstrate proper texture, shape, and technique**

1. Add flour to a cup or bowl.
2. Add water.
3. Mix flour and water together (you may have to add more flour or water) until a dough ball is formed.
4. Lightly flour the table and hands.
5. Add dough to a lightly floured surface and spread into a flat circular shape.
6. Add a small amount of dirt and milkweed seeds to the center.
7. Slightly dampen the edges using wet fingers.
8. Fold the circle in half, then bring the corners of each side to the folded center.
9. Pinch open sides together; you may need to slightly dampen them to ensure the ball is sealed.
10. Roll in leftover flour to avoid sticking to your hands.
11. Throw the ball into a forested area, or some damp garden soil!

For best results, the seed bombs should be somewhere that they can overwinter outdoors.

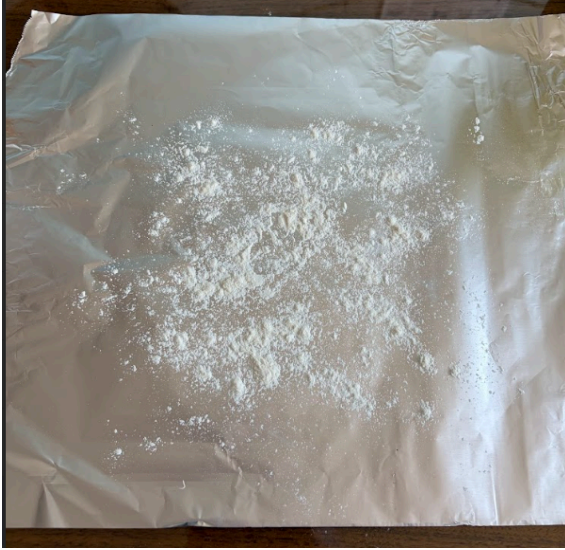


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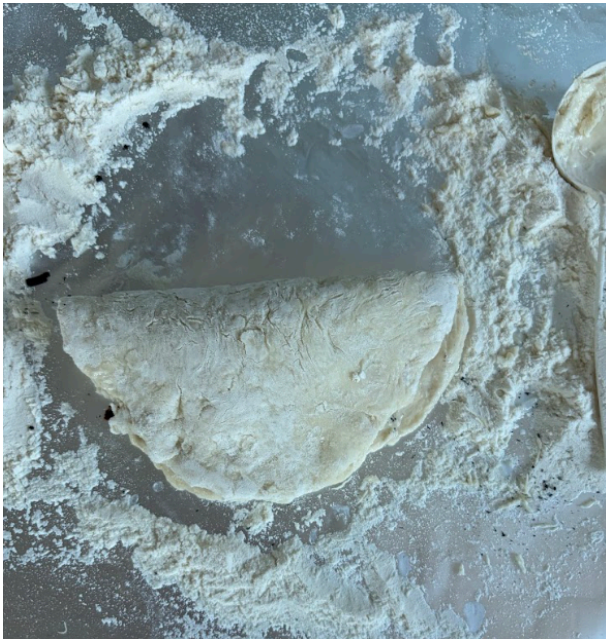


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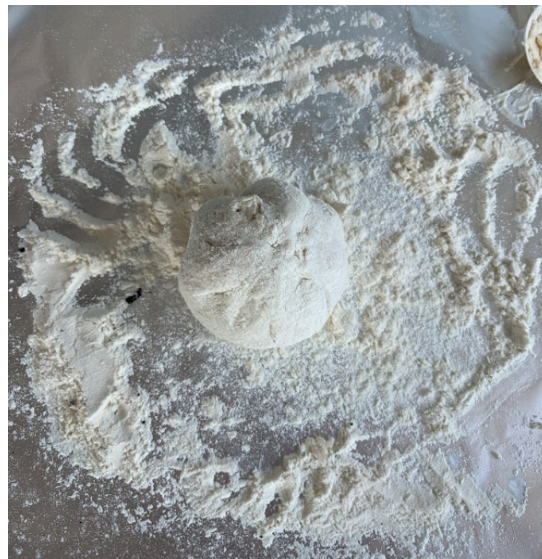
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This activity was adapted from a Nature NB lesson plan.

[For More Nature NB Monarch Resources.](#)

Some good activities to add to the discussion of monarchs: [Good Paper Activities](#)

A map of Monarch habitat and migration: [National Wildlife Federation 2024](#)

Questions were answered using information from [here](#) and [here](#).