

# MAGNIFICENT MONARCHS MONSANTO-ED TO DEATH

An interview with respected Insect Ecologist Orley Taylor in the Guardian's Environment column in April disclosed the fact that this past winter's population of North American monarch butterflies was at its lowest-ever level.

The thrilling annual monarch migration across Canada and the U.S. to winter sites in central Mexico has long enchanted lepidopterists and casual observers. But the census taken this year at the monarchs' winter home found their numbers had declined 59 percent over the previous year, an all-time low.



The two most prominent factors that are putting monarchs in danger of extinction are the planting of GM corn in the Midwest, and a much greater use of herbicides. The herbicides kill the milkweed that traditionally used to grow alongside "natural" cornfields, i.e., non-modified corn plants. Milkweed is vital for monarchs' survival; it is their primary food source.

"What we're seeing in the United States," Taylor said, "is a very precipitous decline of monarchs that's coincident with the adoption of Roundup-ready corn and soybeans."

Round-up is a product of the Monsanto Corporation and is the world's most-used herbicide. Its active ingredient, glyphosate, has been linked to Parkinson's and other diseases.

Another partial cause of monarch die-off is the illegal logging of forests in Mexico, the monarch's traditional destination. Taylor explains the role of the Midwestern Corn Belt in the monarchs' lives, and how the change in weed control from tilling to poisons is threatening their future. Thanks to Round-up and similar products, he says of the all-important milkweed,

"I haven't seen any for years now because of the use of Roundup.....They have effectively eliminated milkweed from almost all of the habitat that monarchs used to use."

There are Monsanto protests erupting all over the country and world, just Google "Monsanto protest" to find one and please lend your voice to this growing chorus of people trying to save our planet.