

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 85

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO

District 20 (Union)

SYNOPSIS

Urges U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list monarch butterfly as threatened species.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging the United States Fish and
2 Wildlife Service to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened
3 species.
4

5 **WHEREAS**, The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is an iconic
6 large orange and black butterfly that is one of the most familiar
7 butterflies in North America; and

8 **WHEREAS**, Every autumn, millions of monarch butterflies undertake a
9 spectacular multi-generational migration thousands of miles from
10 Canada and the northern United States to Mexico and California,
11 stopping along the way in places like New Jersey, to feed and
12 reproduce; and

13 **WHEREAS**, Monarch butterfly populations in North America represent
14 the vast majority of all monarch butterflies in the world; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Monarch butterfly habitat has been drastically reduced and
16 degraded throughout the butterfly’s summer and winter ranges by
17 the decline of nectar sources, commercial development, logging,
18 and broader environmental changes; and

19 **WHEREAS**, One of the major reasons for monarch butterfly population
20 decline is the increased use of pesticides that kill milkweed, the
21 monarch butterfly’s preferred plant host; and

22 **WHEREAS**, Climate change also poses a dire threat to the monarch
23 butterfly, as several scientists have predicted that the monarch
24 butterfly’s overwintering habitat in Mexico may be rendered
25 unsuitable by global climate change, and that much of the monarch
26 butterfly’s summer range may also become unsuitable due to
27 increasing temperatures; and

28 **WHEREAS**, Disease and predation also contribute to population decline
29 and major threats facing the monarch butterfly include numerous
30 pathogens, such as viruses, bacteria, and protozoan parasites; and

31 **WHEREAS**, The monarch butterfly population has declined by more
32 than 90 percent in the past two decades, and is presently near the
33 lowest population ever recorded; and

34 **WHEREAS**, The federal “Endangered Species Act” (16 U.S.C. s.1531
35 et seq.) allows a species to be listed as “threatened” when it is at
36 risk of becoming endangered in a significant portion of its range;
37 and

38 **WHEREAS**, Although there are small populations of monarch
39 butterflies throughout the world, the North American monarch
40 butterfly population is significant because without it, the
41 redundancy, resiliency, and representation of the species would be
42 so impaired that the monarch butterfly would become increasingly
43 vulnerable to extinction; and

44 **WHEREAS**, Numerous other species have been protected under the
45 federal Endangered Species Act that have large ranges and
46 relatively abundant population sizes but have experienced
47 precipitous population decline and face significant threats to their
48 continued existence, such as the gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*),

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1 Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), and piping plover (*Charadrius*
2 *melodus*); and

3 **WHEREAS**, In 2014, a group of conservationists, including the Center
4 for Biological Diversity, the Center for Food Safety, and the Xerces
5 Society, petitioned the Secretary of the United States Department of
6 the Interior, through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to
7 protect the monarch butterfly under the federal Endangered Species
8 Act; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Based on information in that petition, the U.S. Fish and
10 Wildlife Service determined that the monarch butterfly population
11 may warrant federal protection, and began the process of
12 conducting a thorough assessment to determine if the monarch
13 butterfly should be listed as a threatened species; and

14 **WHEREAS**, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is presently developing
15 a database to capture new, ongoing, and planned conservation
16 efforts for the monarch butterfly, including the enhancement of
17 blooming nectar plant habitats, and to help the agency and its
18 conservation partners assess conditions for the monarch butterfly
19 now and into the future; and

20 **WHEREAS**, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service anticipates making a
21 listing decision concerning the monarch butterfly in June 2019; and

22 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey has long supported the preservation of the
23 monarch butterfly, and in 2017, passed two separate pieces of
24 legislation helping to protect the species: the “Adopt a Monarch
25 Butterfly Waystation Act,” P.L.2017, c.250 (C.13:1B-15.162 et
26 seq.), and the “Milkweed for Monarchs Act,” P.L.2017, c.252
27 (C.13:1B-15.170 et seq.); and

28 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey values the important role that pollinators, such
29 as the monarch butterfly, play in the ecology of the State and the
30 nation, and there is bi-partisan support in New Jersey for programs
31 and legislation that protect and encourage pollinators and the
32 habitats that support them; now, therefore,

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34 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
35 Jersey:

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37 1. This House urges the United States Fish and Wildlife
38 Service to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species under
39 the federal Endangered Species Act.

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41 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
42 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
43 President of the United States, the Secretary of the United States
44 Department of the Interior, the Director of the United States Fish
45 and Wildlife Service in the United States Department of the
46 Interior, every member of Congress elected from the State of New
47 Jersey, the Governor of New Jersey, and the Commissioner of the
48 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

STATEMENT

This resolution urges the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species.

The monarch butterfly is an iconic large orange and black butterfly that is one of the most familiar butterflies in North America. Every autumn, millions of monarch butterflies undertake a spectacular multi-generational migration thousands of miles from Canada and the northern United States to Mexico and California, stopping along the way in places like New Jersey, to feed and reproduce. Monarch butterfly populations in North America represent the vast majority of all monarch butterflies in the world; however, its habitat has been drastically reduced and degraded by the decline of nectar sources, commercial development, logging, and broader environmental changes.

One of the major reasons for monarch butterfly population decline is the increased use of pesticides that kill milkweed, the monarch butterfly's preferred plant host. Climate change also poses a dire threat to the monarch butterfly, as several scientists have predicted that the monarch butterfly's overwintering habitat in Mexico may be rendered unsuitable by global climate change, and that much of the monarch butterfly's summer range may also become unsuitable due to increasing temperatures. Disease and predation also contribute to population declines and major threats facing the monarch butterfly include numerous pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, and protozoan parasites. The monarch butterfly population has declined by more than 90 percent in the past two decades, and is presently near the lowest population ever recorded.

The federal "Endangered Species Act" allows a species to be listed as "threatened" when it is at risk of becoming endangered in a significant portion of its range. Although there are small populations of monarch butterflies throughout the world, the North American monarch butterfly population is significant because without it, the redundancy, resiliency, and representation of the species would be so impaired that the monarch butterfly would become increasingly vulnerable to extinction.

In 2014, a group of conservationists, including the Center for Biological Diversity, the Center for Food Safety, and the Xerces Society, petitioned the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), to protect the monarch butterfly under the federal Endangered Species Act. Based on information in that petition, the USFWS determined that the monarch butterfly population may warrant federal protection, and began the process of conducting a thorough assessment to determine if the monarch butterfly should be listed as a threatened species. The USFWS is presently developing a database to capture new, ongoing, and planned conservation efforts for the monarch butterfly, including the

1 enhancement of blooming nectar plant habitats, and to help the
2 agency and its conservation partners assess conditions for the
3 monarch butterfly now and into the future.
4 The USFWS anticipates making a listing decision concerning the
5 monarch butterfly in June 2019. New Jersey has long supported the
6 preservation of the monarch butterfly, and in 2017, passed two
7 separate pieces of legislation helping to protect the species: the
8 “Adopt a Monarch Butterfly Waystation Act” and the “Milkweed
9 for Monarchs Act.” New Jersey values the important role that
10 pollinators, such as the monarch butterfly, play in the ecology of the
11 State and the nation, and there is bi-partisan support in New Jersey
12 for programs and legislation that protect and encourage pollinators
13 and the habitats that support them.