

Monarchs

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monarch from this area may be spotted in Georgia, Texas or Mexico. Both monarch caterpillars and chrysalis can be seen at the Cape May Bird Observatory, at the Northwood Center on East Lake Drive in Cape May Point.

Four monarchs had emerged from their chrysalis earlier in the day at the observatory, Brendel said.

"When they first come out of the chrysalis, their wings are tiny and their abdomens are huge," she said.

Monarchs do not grow once they emerge. She said a bigger caterpillar produces a bigger butterfly.

Before tagging, the butterflies are measured and their abdomens touched to see how much fat they have acquired. The information is recorded. Fat content is rated one through five, with one being similar to an empty tube of toothpaste and four being a "chunkster," according to Monitoring Field Tech Katherine Burns.

"The scales on their wings are mainly just for colorization, so they let predators know 'I'm toxic, don't eat me,' because orange and black in the natural world tends to mean that," Burns said.

Brendel said milkweed, a favorite food of monarchs, contains a heart toxin. She said any creature that has a

heart would find monarchs distasteful and if they ate a sufficient quantity, their heart would stop. Birds, mammals and lizards do not eat monarchs, but invertebrates such as spiders and the praying mantis will consume the butterfly, Brendel said.

The butterflies Brendel and Burns were tagging were "fresh and new," with no rips or tears on their wings.

"They've never been to Mexico, they've never really taken a long flight before in their lives," Brendel said.

She said they had the navigational ability to find a very small place in the mountains of Michoacán, Mexico.

"For an animal that is half a gram, the same weight as a paper clip, and has the brain the size of a poppy seed, it's going to a place where it's never been to before. It's pretty spectacular," Brendel said.

She said the fourth or fifth generation of monarch born after mid-August has different DNA, allowing them to live longer, eight to nine months, making a one-way trip to Mexico. Earlier generations of monarch live only four to six weeks, Brendel said.

The traveling monarchs have no interest in mating but are focused solely on migrating to Mexico. When monarchs arrive in Mexico and roost, they do not feed but live off the fat they have



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A recently emerged monarch butterfly is surrounded by chrysalis of others.

acquired on their journey, according to Brendel. She said the butterflies go into a sort of hibernation while clinging to fir trees in the mountains.

Brendel said roosting colonies break up in March, monarchs mate and begin flying north when milkweed is sprouting in temperate zones. The butterflies will lay their eggs on fresh milkweed in northern Mexico and southern Texas.

Burns described monarch migration as a ladder and a slide.

"The slide is like a super generation that goes all the way down to Mexico, and there is sort of like a ladder of generations that goes back up north," she said.

Burns, of Portland, Maine, said she studied environmental science in college with a concentration on biology. She said she has always been

interested in pollinators.

"I've worked with native bees for the past two years in both Vermont and California," Burns said.

She said she thought it would be nice to take a "butterfly break" and research another type of pollinator. Burns said she wanted to be a part of the research of the Monarch Monitoring Project of the Cape May Bird Observatory.

Brendel graduated from Oakland University in Rochester, Mich., in 2014 with a film/theater degree. Before joining the monarch monitoring team, she raised more than 500 monarchs from the egg stage on her family's beef cattle farm in Michigan.

Her moment of becoming aware of monarchs occurred when she and her father were walking on the family farm and found a monarch caterpillar.

While the monarch count is still in progress, Brendel said she has seen higher numbers than last year. Both Brendel and Burns have tagged more than 200 monarchs so far this season, which ends around Halloween.

Brendel conducts a "census run" three times daily in September and October to count monarchs. She said it was a sampling technique and not meant to count every monarch in Cape May.

Brendel said her favorite part of her job is being able to talk to the public and do informal tagging demonstrations.

Cape May Point acts as a funnel for the monarchs before they make their flight to Delaware, Burns said. She said many in the Cape May area have planted pollinator gardens and milkweed, providing a beneficial rest stop for the butterflies.

Following a tagging, Saige Biddison, 6, of Kimberton, Pa., held out her hand and provided a launch pad for a departing monarch. Saige, a serious fan of monarchs, was wearing a butterfly shirt. She smiled with delight as the monarch flew skyward.

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Cracked courts

Continued from Page A1

is anticipated the courts will be demolished, the site may be accessible by truck.

Freeman Douglass Park has a history of construction problems and lawsuits. In 2010, Lower Township Council approved a settlement of litigation with Fondacaro Companies Inc. v. Lower Township v. Van Note-Harvey Associates and Bruce Graham.

Settlements were reached with Fondacaro, the construction company and the surety company that bonded the Bennett's Crossing project, International Fidelity Insurance Co. In 2009, the lawsuit was dismissed and the case put into

arbitration with Fondacaro.

After a change of township solicitors from Paul Baldini to Tony Monzo, the case returned to court on a motion. Fondacaro had declared bankruptcy, opening up International Fidelity to claims from the township.

International Fidelity worked out an agreement with Fondacaro's attorney for payment of some legal fees and worked on a settlement among all three parties that would dismiss all claims without any payment by the township. Early allegations placed blame on the engineer for flaws in the project.

A third-party claim was filed against the engineer but was dismissed when Baldini did not file an affidavit of merit, leaving the township with no ability to recover against the engineer. Lacking an expert, the township was not able to make a valid claim against Fondacaro.

Problems with Freeman Douglass Park began in 2005. At that point, the project was 75 percent to 80 percent complete. Work halted and Fondacaro stopped paying subcontractors. International Fidelity allowed the township to hire contractors to do some of the work.

Township Council approved a bond for \$660,000 in 2007 to purchase dirt to fill in playing fields that flooded. The project was two years behind schedule and more than \$1 million over budget at that point.

Ridgway said this week the number of tennis courts would be increased to five to help fill a need of Lower Cape May Regional High School. Currently, the park has three tennis courts and two basketball courts, which will be reduced to one court, he said.

Ridgway said test borings would confirm what is underneath the courts.

"The whole issue there is the subsurface," Ridgway said. "Before we do this project over, our concern is what is below."

He said if tests do not show favorable results for building new basketball and tennis courts, a new plan may have to go in place for that part of the recreation area. Ridgway said he did not know how long public tennis and basketball courts should last.

Capital funds were set aside in this year's budget for replacement of the courts along with leftover money from last year's capital budget, he said.

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1	11:05	11:34	4:33	5:19
2	11:59		5:26	6:17
3	12:32	12:58	6:22	7:19
4	1:35	2:01	7:23	8:24
5	2:42	3:07	8:27	9:27
6	3:49	4:10	9:31	10:26
7	4:49	5:06	10:31	11:18

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