



FORESTS **FOR**  
MONARCHS

# LA CRUZ HABITAT PROTECTION PROJECT



# 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT





*Monarchs at el Rosario Sanctuary Site 2024*

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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I look back on the past two years with immense gratitude and pride for all we have accomplished together. In 2023, we celebrated another banner year, planting 1.3 million trees across the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve area, its buffer zone, and the Highland Lakes Watershed region. Building on that success, in 2024, we planted another 670,000 trees, each contributing to restoring critical habitats for monarch butterflies and protecting our environment.

While focused on monarchs and trees, our work is ultimately about empowering communities. It's about the farmers who nurture the trees, the children who learn the value of conservation, and the women who step into leadership roles to guide these projects forward. The impact of our efforts goes beyond environmental restoration—it enriches lives, strengthens communities, and builds a foundation for future generations.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to deepening our impact and expanding our reach. None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and community members. Your belief in our mission drives us to continue this important work. We are deeply grateful for your continued support. Together, we can continue to make a difference—one tree, one community, one life at a time.

*Megan Fulton*

**MEGAN FULTON**  
Executive Director

### OUR MISSION:

La Cruz Habitat Protection Project, Inc. (dba Forests for Monarchs), reforests land in and around the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, where millions of monarch butterflies spend each winter, and in the Highland Lakes Area of Michoacán, Mexico. Our goal is to help conserve the monarch butterfly winter habitat while aiding the surrounding communities in creating a sustainable livelihood supported by good forest stewardship.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# STATE OF THE MONARCH IN 2023-2024

In 2023, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reclassified the monarch butterfly from "endangered" to "vulnerable." This decision followed University of Georgia researcher Andrew Davis's challenge to the IUCN's population models, highlighting complexities in assessing the monarch's status.

Since the 1990s, the monarch population has declined by 80-90%. However, it has stabilized at around 55 million since 2014. Davis attributes the historical population abundance to land clearing and mass farming in the 1800s, which created ideal conditions for milkweed, nectar-producing plants, and monarchs.

Despite the reclassification, monarchs remain at risk due to climate change, habitat loss, and pesticide use. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which did not list the monarch as endangered in 2020, is expected to release a new decision in late 2024.

The IUCN's updated classification was published in December 2023, reflecting the new research. Meanwhile, the latest World Wildlife Fund Mexico survey reports a 59% drop in monarchs at overwintering sites, covering just 2.2 acres, down from 5.4 acres last year. Drought and heat, exacerbated by climate change, are critical factors in this decline, in addition to the loss of habitat in Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

Our team's visit to overwintering sites in early 2024 revealed fewer clusters, indicating ongoing challenges for the Eastern monarch population.





# 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



1,300,000

native trees planted



1,193

hectares of degraded forest  
restored and cleared land  
reforested



3,943

volunteers that supported  
reforestation efforts



71

communities and  
landowners impacted



# 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



670,000

native trees planted



615

hectares of degraded forest  
restored and cleared land  
reforested



3,601

volunteers that supported  
reforestation efforts



55

communities and  
landowners impacted



# PROGRAM UPDATES:

## 2023: A Year of Growth and Challenge

We are proud to report that 2023 was another banner year for Forests for Monarchs, with 1.3 million trees planted across high-need areas in Michoacán, Mexico. However, the year was not without its challenges. A combination of fire and site damage led to a lower-than-average survival rate of 65% for trees planted in 2022. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, we mobilized our resources to educate, retrain, and support affected communities, enabling them to take immediate action where possible. Site issues ranged from improper land management, livestock infringement, and vehicle damage near roads and paths.

Despite these setbacks, we are pleased to share that the survival rate for trees planted in 2023 rebounded to 82%. This improvement is a testament to the resilience of our team and partners, as well as the dedicated efforts of the local communities. A notable challenge we faced in 2023 was a rise in bark beetle infestations. Many affected sites were treated early thanks to vigilant landowners and community members, saving many trees.

## 2024: Continuing the Momentum

In 2024, we planted 670,000 trees, furthering our mission to restore critical habitats for monarch butterflies and other wildlife, bringing our total to over 13 million trees planted since 1997.

Our partnerships have been instrumental in achieving these milestones. We are excited to share that our ongoing collaboration with the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA) has resulted in the planting of 1.6 million trees in high-need areas. In 2023, we planted another 500,000 trees with One Tree Planted and 500,000 with American Forests, strengthening our regional impact.

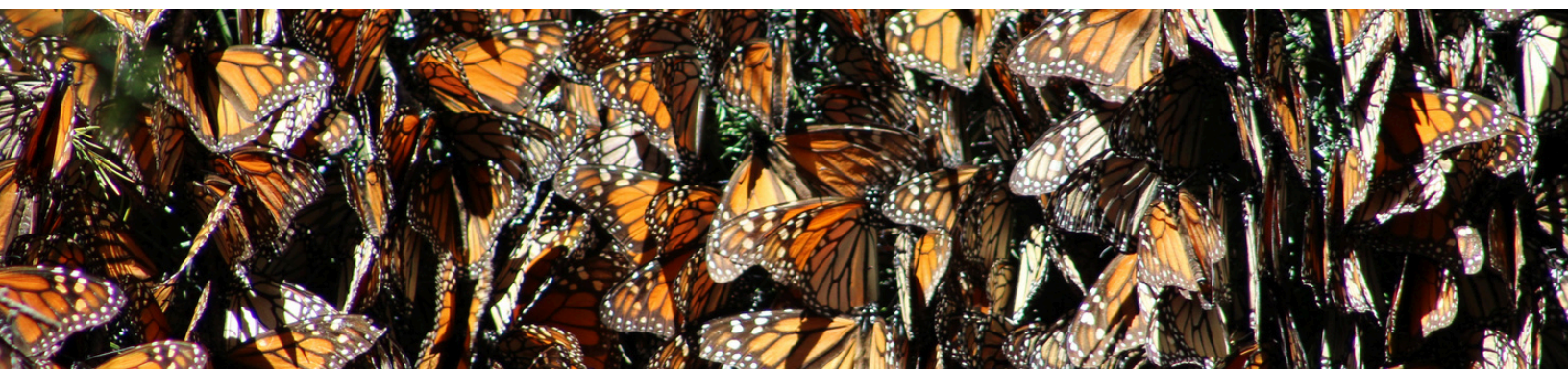
This year, we expanded our partner network, forging new relationships with the Global Improvement Group and Forestmatic. In 2024, we planted 50,000 trees with the Global Improvement Group and 1,000 trees with Forestmatic. Additionally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Driscoll's Berries for their generous grant, which enabled the planting of 20,000 trees in 2024.

## Thank you!

We are deeply grateful to our longtime partners, whose unwavering support continues to drive our success. Thank you to Vermont Woods Studios, the Meshewa Farm Foundation, The Premack Law Office, Claudia Schwalm Photography, Derby Farm Flowers & Gardens, and White Mountain Nature Center for their commitment to our cause.

As we look ahead, we remain dedicated to addressing the challenges of climate change, land conservation and preservation, and other environmental threats. With the continued support of our partners and the tireless efforts of the communities we serve, we are confident that we can achieve even greater success in the years to come.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us!





# 2023 FINANCES

## Total Contributions

**\$558,788**

Grants & Foundations

\$499,239

Corporate Contributions

\$6,125

Individual Contributions & Public Support

\$53,414

## Program Expenses

**\$477,250**

Tree Seedling Production + Transportation & Distribution

\$457,106

Monitoring & Technical Field Support

\$17,144

Public Outreach & Education

\$3,000

## Administrative Expenses

**\$57,971**

Fundraising Expenses

\$27,158

Management & General Expenses

\$30,813

## Total Expenses

**\$535,221**

For the 2023 year, 89% of our total yearly expenses were directed towards our reforestation efforts and conservation efforts. The remaining funds are allocated for monitoring and multi-year project expenses in the coming year.

For a more in-depth look at our financial information, please see our 2023 990 located on our website under the "Reports & Finances" tab.

Your donation directly supports the production of native trees in communities around the Monarch Biosphere Reserve and the Highland Lakes Watershed Region.

[www.forestsformonarchs.org/donate](http://www.forestsformonarchs.org/donate)







# FORESTS **FOR** MONARCHS

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