

Press Release
Mexico City, Mexico, 9 February 2017

AREA OCCUPIED BY MONARCH BUTTERFLY COLONIES IN MEXICO DURING THE 2016–2017 WINTERING SEASON



- An area of woodlands measuring 2.91 hectares, occupied by 13 monarch butterfly colonies, was identified.
- This represents a 27.42% decrease from the 2015–2016 season, which accounted for 4.01 hectares.
- This is the first time Mexico has reported a small wintering colony established in the town of Real del Mar in Tijuana, Baja California Norte.

Mexico's National Commission for Protected Natural Areas (*Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas*—Conanp), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Mexican Nature Conservancy Fund (*Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza*—FMCN), and the Environmental Mission of the Mexican Gendarmerie released information on the different actions carried out, in conjunction with the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, to protect and conserve this migratory phenomenon.

The Conanp's National Commissioner, Alejandro Del Mazo Maza, said that in the 2016–2017 season, an area of 2.91 hectares of woodlands was occupied by 13 monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) colonies, eight within (2.22 hectares) and five outside (0.69 hectares) the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve. This figure represents a 27.43 percent decrease with respect to the occupied area reported for the 2015-2016 season (4.01 hectares), due primarily to the extreme climate conditions that occurred in March 2016.

He also noted that the National Monitoring Network has been strengthened, with the involvement of 22 Mexican states, 38 state protected natural areas, and 33 federal protected natural areas, the collaboration of civil society, academia, the private sector, and state and municipal governments, and communal farms and communities.

He further stated that thanks to citizen engagement, the monitoring network in the northwest region reported the **first wintering colony** in the town of Real del Mar, in Tijuana, Baja California Norte, in addition to a tagged female that had traveled 1800 kilometers from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to the Cerro Pelón Sanctuary in Mexico State.

The Conanp Commissioner highlighted the ongoing work of the Mexican Gendarmerie's Environmental Mission at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, begun in August 2016, which has contributed to prevention and a drop in environmental offenses that may occur in the region.

Commissioner General Benjamín Grajeda, head of the Gendarmerie Division, said that 117 enforcement actions have been conducted in coordination with the Office of the Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection (*Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente—Profepa*) and state authorities. He pointed to 11 inspections at sawmills, three of which were shut down and another three that were subject to temporary closure.

As part of the enforcement actions of the Gendarmerie's Environmental Mission, he noted that 2300 kilometers of land and air patrols have been completed, as well as the joint work carried out with partners such as the WWF, the FMCN, and academic institutions such as the Institute of Biology at *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, among others.

This joint work has enabled specific studies to obtain information on the migratory path, biology and habitats used by the monarch along its travels across Mexico.

Omar Vidal, CEO of WWF, explained the monitoring methodology used to estimate the occupied woodland areas in the wintering sites, carried out jointly with Conanp since 2004.

Lorenzo Rosenzweig, Director of the FMCN, said that the monarch butterfly migratory phenomenon is a conservation success story for Mexico, achieved thanks to the participation of the public, private, and academic sectors.

Lastly, the National Commissioner said that migratory species teach us lessons for the three countries—the United States, Canada and Mexico—to continue their work to protect and conserve those species.

The monarch butterflies that winter in Mexico migrate up to 4,000 kilometers from Canada and the United States to arrive at the temperate forests of Mexico State and Michoacán in November, where they stay for five months. The Reserve protects 56,259 hectares and its nucleus zone (13,551 hectares) includes the woodlands where the monarch butterflies spend their winters in Mexico.

