Monarch Butterfly

Why in News?

The U.S. recently proposed listing of the Monarch Butterfly under its Endangered Species Act, to protect its declining population.

- **Monarch** – It is a large and brilliantly colored among the most easily recognizable butterfly species.
- **Scientific name –** *Danaus Plexippus*
  - **Greek meaning** – Sleepy transformation, that evokes the species' ability to *hibernate and metamorphize*.
- **Distribution** – North, Central, and South America, Australia, Pacific Islands, *India*, and Western Europe.

***Monarch Butterfly** is known as milkweed, common tiger, wanderer, and black-veined brown depending on the region they are found.*

- **Habitat** – Gardens, managed Corridors, agricultural areas, and natural and restored areas.
- **Morphology** – It possess 2 pairs of brilliant orange-red wings, featuring black veins and white spots along the edges.
- The body is black spotted with white markings.



- **Sexual dimorphism**
  - **Male** – 2 black spots in the center of their hind wings, which females lack.
  - **Females** – It have thicker wing veins than males.
- The males attract females to mate by releasing chemicals from scent glands on the hind wings.

- **Growing conditions** - *Milkweed* is the only plant on which monarchs will lay their eggs and the only source of food for baby caterpillars.
- **Migratory bird** – They travel between *1,200 and 2,800 miles or more* from the northeast United States, and southeast Canada *to the mountain forests in central Mexico.*
- They hibernate from the beginning of November to mid-March.
- **Threats** – Habitat loss caused by human activities such as,
    - Farming
    - Urban development
    - Widespread use of pesticides
    - Climate change

Eastern migratory monarch population has declined by about 80% while the western migratory population has dropped by more than 95%. The western populations at greater than 99% chance of extinction by 2080.

- **Conservation Status - IUCN Status**
    - Endangered in 2022
    - **Vulnerable in 2023**

References

1. The Hindu| Declining of Monarch Butterfly
2. World Wildlife Org| Monarch Butterfly

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