**South Bass Island 9-13 to 9-14-14 monarch roosts and migration**

[**Candy & Kasey**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/candy__kasey/)

Our family journeyed to the Lake Erie Islands this weekend. The kids wanted chocolate and a fun weekend on the island, and I wanted to document the monarch migration on South Bass island. I brought Journey North flyers with me, and my LEINWC naturalist friend Jackie Taylor and I peppered the island with flyers--restaurants, hotels, butterflyhouse, ferry, etc. We had a mission to document the monarch migration in and around the islands.  
  
My kids, hubby and I arrived at the Miller ferry dock on Catawba island, ready to load our car and ride across to South Bass island. It was miserably cold, 56F, with strong winds out of the north, easily 20-30 mph sustained gusts. Bone-chilling cold. The winds were so strong that waves were crashing over the ferry dock, and the ride across was a bit rough--our daughter got seasick for the first time ever while crossing. White caps everywhere, easily 4-6 ft waves. But we made it safely, no sweat for seasoned ferry captains.  
  
We arrived to the island, got a quick bite to eat, and headed to the west side of the island to meet up with Jackie. I saw a monarch in the restaurant parking lot, one crossing the road near the butterflyhouse, and one crossing the road as we left Jackie's. My hopes rose--monarchs flying around in the interior of the island, bad weather--I knew chances were good that monarchs were gathered at the lighthouse.   
  
We got to the lighthouse grounds, and found a few monarchs nectaring in the sunflower field and waystation. I figured they would roost closer to 4 pm, so we left to visit the downtown playground. We returned around 3pm, and more were gathering to roost. A local family has a private drive to their home, where monarchs often roost in the trees along the driveway. The owners very kindly give nature center staff permission to tag and photograph monarchs there. I walked up the drive, and my jaw dropped. I shrieked. Dozens and dozens of monarchs. I texted Jackie--"Get here NOW." I took photos, hubby videotaped with his cellphone. I started counting individual butterflies, and had just reached 200 when Jackie walked up--I had only counted about half the roosts. There were about 350 monarchs along the driveway, and my husband counted another 50 or so flying in the trees by the lighthouse and flying deeper into the tree canopy where he lost sight of them. It was awesome! I felt like I was at Pacific Grove.   
  
We left for a short while, returning about 11/2hrs later to see what was going on. Monarchs closer to the ground had moved higher. Those that were mid-canopy had stayed put. The wind was easing up at the lighthouse, but still a strong breeze. It was quiet, warm and still by the tree-lined driveway where most of the roosts were.  
  
Another cold night, and we awoke to a cool cloudy morning. By 10 am, it was still only 55F. Around noon, it finally warmed up to 58F, and monarchs started leaving the roosts and heading to the sunflower field or waystation to feed. There were dozens, and Jackie tagged a number of them. Visitors to the lighthouse grounds noticed the monarchs, and Jackie and I held several impromptu talks with visitors, and encouraged them to report sightings on Journey North. I taped a JN flyer to the entrance pole of the lighthouse grounds. People really enjoyed seeing the roosts, and were very interested to learn more about tagging and the migration through the islands.  
As the day went on, the skies cleared and the sun came out more and more. Winds calmed. I knew the monarchs would leave. We returned to the lighthouse grounds after lunch, and several visitors greeted us, reporting that monarchs were nectaring on the plants alongside the cliff (next to the water). I knew the monarchs were leaving. We returned about 5 pm, and found only a few dozen monarchs remaining. It was a good day to cross the lake, just 6 miles to the mainland! The ferry ride home was smooth and warm, kids had a much better time this trip. Smooth sailing for us and the monarchs!

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