

# Ranger Rick's ADVENTURES

"GOT WILDFLOWERS?"

STORY BY GERRY BISHOP; ART BY THE CHARACTERSHOP

Nice going, Boomer! You said we could take a shortcut through this cornfield, and now we're lost.

We're not lost—just a little unsure of where we are at the moment.

RANGER RICK RACCOON, SCARLETT FOX, AND BOOMER BADGER ARE IN THE MIDWEST TO SEE AN AMAZING EVENT THAT HAPPENS EVERY FALL: THE MIGRATION OF MONARCH BUTTERFLIES FROM CANADA TO MEXICO.



Oh, that makes me feel a LOT better.

Don't worry, Scarlett. We'll find our way out.



This cornfield reminds me, Boomer: You should ease up on the soda.

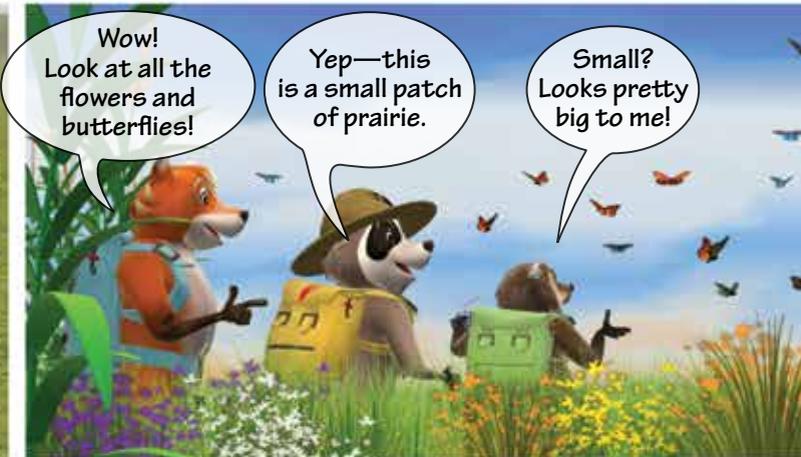
Huh? What does a cornfield have to do with my Pudge?

She's talking about the stuff IN your soda, Boomer.

SCARLETT EXPLAINS TO BOOMER THAT MOST OF THE SWEETNESS IN SODA COMES FROM A KIND OF SUGAR MADE FROM CORN CALLED HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP. SCIENTISTS ARE DISCOVERING THAT HAVING TOO MUCH OF THIS IS UNHEALTHY.



Cheer up, you two. I think we're coming to the end of the field.



Wow! Look at all the flowers and butterflies!

Yep—this is a small patch of prairie.

Small? Looks pretty big to me!



It looks big until you think of what it used to be like here, Boomer.



You're right, and some of what's left is disappearing every day!

Well, hello! And who are you?

RICK EXPLAINS THAT PRAIRIES FULL OF WILDFLOWERS AND GRASSES ONCE COVERED THE UNITED STATES FROM THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS. BUT ALMOST ALL HAVE BEEN TURNED INTO FIELDS FOR RAISING CROPS OR PASTURES FOR GRAZING CATTLE.



I'm Monica Monarch. And I'll bet you're Scarlett, Rick, and Boomer. I'd know you anywhere.

Yep, that's us. Glad to meet you.



The answer is coming right at us—look!

But what's this about more prairie disappearing?



A HUGE tractor!

We need to get outta here—now!



There's a road ahead where we'll be safe. Hurry!

A FEW MOMENTS LATER...



Wow—that was scary!

And bad news for you butterflies. He's plowing under all those wildflowers. Where will you get sweet nectar to sip?

I'm not sure. We monarchs have been stopping at this little patch of prairie on our migration each year. And now it's being wiped out!

MONICA TELLS HER NEW FRIENDS THAT FARMERS ARE CLEARING MORE AND MORE LAND TO RAISE CORN AND OTHER CROPS. CORN IS USED TO MAKE ALL KINDS OF PRODUCTS, FROM SWEETENER FOR SODA TO FUEL FOR CARS AND TRUCKS. CORN IS ALSO GROWN TO FEED LIVESTOCK SUCH AS CATTLE AND PIGS.



Come on, gang. Let's see if we can find another place for Monica and her friends.



Look—there are some flowers the butterflies will like.

She wants to kill “bad” bugs, but she’s also killing “good” bugs—like butterflies!

Yeah, but someone’s spraying them with bug killer!



PEE-EW, that stuff is blowing our way!

Let’s get outta here!



We’ll say good-bye now, Monica, and wish you well on your journey!

OK, Rick. Think I’ll help myself to a sip of nectar first.



Look—here comes a monarch already!

We’re just in time for their migration!



Oh, NO! They’re turning that prairie patch into a parking lot!

There goes another feeding stop. At this rate, we’ll never make it to Mexico!

This means trouble for monarchs next spring, too!

RICK EXPLAINS THAT, DURING THE MONARCHS’ RETURN FLIGHT IN SPRING, THEY STOP TO LAY THEIR EGGS—ON MILKWEED PLANTS ONLY. SO AS THE MILKWEEDS DISAPPEAR, THERE ARE FEWER AND FEWER PLACES FOR MONARCHS TO LAY THEIR EGGS.



A BIT LATER...

They’re carrying flowers!

Your search for a meal may be over, Monica. Check out those kids.



Keep low—we don’t want anyone to see us!



If you’re thirsty, Boomer, have some of this water instead.



That’s right. Even the little things we do can add up to big problems for wild creatures.

And other little things we do—such as planting gardens—can add up to big favors!



Here’s a flower for our new garden, Ms. Kramer.

Mine’s a milkweed. The monarchs will love it next spring!



They’re planting a garden for butterflies!

Cool! Maybe we can do that when we get back to Deep Green Wood!

For sure, Boomer. Everyone can do something to help.



So, here’s to the monarchs. Starting now, we’ll all do what we can to help them!

And THAT’S sweet enough for me!

## MORE FACTS

• Every fall, millions of monarchs travel from as far north as Canada to a forest in Mexico. They spend the winter there, and then they head back north in the spring.

• On their way north, the butterflies lay eggs on milkweed plants. The eggs hatch into caterpillars that eat the milkweed. Then the caterpillars turn into more adults, which continue the migration north.

• Today, monarchs face many problems. Too many trees in their winter home are being cut down. Insect sprays and other chemicals are harming them. And too many of the plants they need are destroyed, as you saw in this story.

• The good news is that many people are helping monarchs and other butterflies. Some farmers, for example, save the wildflowers that grow on their properties, and others are even planting more!

• For more about planting your own garden to help traveling monarchs, go online to [nwf.org/rr](http://nwf.org/rr) and click on the “Plant a Butterfly Garden” section.