

GSL GRUNT

Promoting Conservation in the Gulf of Mexico

Nature's Gift!

December is the holiday month of giving. January is the month of new beginnings! The Gulf's ecosystem gives us so much. It provides natural resources we need for food, economic growth, and disaster protection. It is truly a gift from nature. One special species in our ecosystem is the Monarch Butterfly. These butterflies play an important role in keeping our environment healthy. Every winter, they fly over the Gulf to Mexico in search of warmer weather. When they return, they help with pollination and serve as an indicator of our environment's health. Sadly, Monarch Butterflies are now endangered. A major reason for their decline is the loss of milkweed plants. Monarchs can only lay their eggs on milkweed, which is also a vital food source for their caterpillars. Without milkweed, these butterflies cannot survive. Currently, there are no recorded observations of Monarch Butterflies on GulfSeeLife. This year, let's make it our gift to nature to change that. As members of the GSL community, let's upload our observations of Monarch Butterflies as they return. Together, we can give back to nature and protect the future of this species to help better manage our Gulf Coast resources.

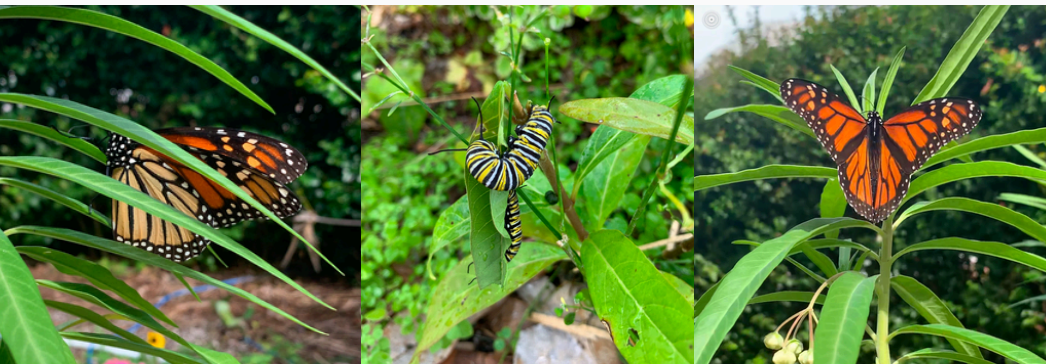


PHOTO OF MONARCH BUTTERFLY AND CATERPILLARS
BY GSL USER KAYLEIGH MAZARIEGOS

New Species Additions:

**THANKS TO YOUR
OBSERVATIONS WE'VE
ADDED THE FOLLOWING
SPECIES:**

BIRDS:

-BARRED OWL

FISH:

-GULF MENHADEN

INVERTEBRATES:

-APPLE SNAIL

REPTILES:

-ALLIGATOR

INSECTS:

**-MONARCH BUTTERFLY
-TERSA SPHINX MOTH**

MAMMALS:

**-OPOSSUM
-WILD BOAR**

PLANTS:

**-SAW PALMETTO
-WINGED SUMAC**



Most Popular Observation:

A Florida Stone Crab was spotted by Alex Kissel along the Florida coast on November 5th. The observation was classified as research grade, contributing valuable data to our understanding of local wildlife. Florida stone crabs (*Menippe mercenaria*) are resilient crustaceans known for their strong, oversized claws. They thrive in a variety of coastal habitats. Stone crabs play an important role in maintaining healthy marine ecosystems by feeding on small shellfish and algae. Their claws are sustainably harvested, making them a key part of Florida's seafood industry. Thank you, Alex, for your well-liked contribution to GulfSeeLife!



Becoming a Star User

Share your observations on GulfSeeLife for a chance to be featured as next month's Star User. Star Users are community members who consistently upload observations, helping to protect and preserve biodiversity along the Gulf Coast. The community member with the most observations at the end of the month is given the title. By becoming a star user, you will get the opportunity to receive GSL merchandise such as our branded shirts and stickers. You will also gain recognition for your hard work on our monthly newsletter. Keep posting your observations on GulfSeeLife and you could be the next star user!

JOIN US ON
SOCIAL MEDIA:
@GULFSEELIFE



JENNIFER MATTA

