



# Monarch Butterflies

## Why in News?

Recently, migratory **monarch butterflies** have been declared endangered in the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) Red List of threatened species.

## What do we know about Monarch Butterfly?

### ▪ About:

- It's a sub-species of the *Danaus plexippus* butterfly that **travels around 4,000 kilometres across America.**
- It's the most **recognizable butterfly species** that are **essential pollinators and further provides various ecosystem services** such as maintaining the global food web.
- A smaller population of the species is also found in countries like Australia, Hawaii, and India.

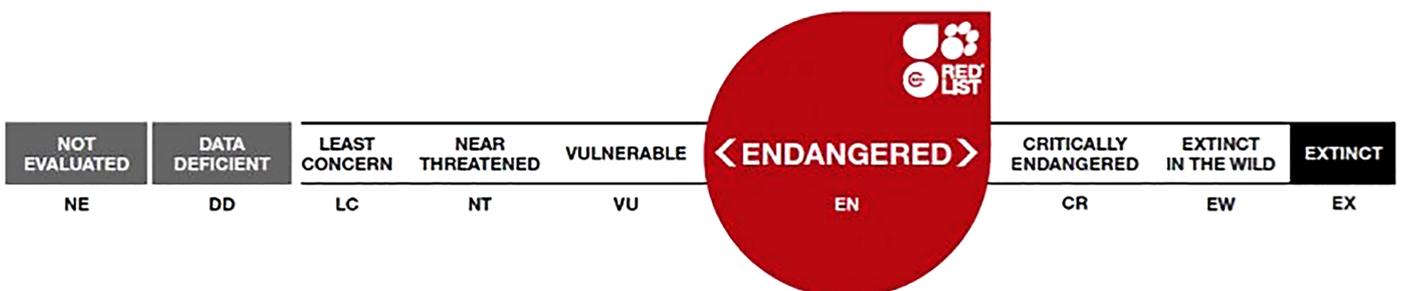
### ▪ Issues:

- Their population in the continent has **declined 23-72% over the last decade.**
- The population of the eastern monarchs that migrate from the eastern United States and Canada — the bigger group — also shrunk by 84% from 1996-2014.
- They follow a unique lifestyle as they **breed in only one particular plant The Milkweeds**, but the **removal of this plant by farmers led to their decrease in population.**
  - Further, farmers also widely use a **weedicide** for the removal of milkweeds.
    - Weedicide are known as the **weed killers or pesticides** that are used to kill unwanted plants
- Legal and illegal logging and [deforestation](#) make space for **agriculture and urban development**, which causes habitat destruction.
- **Frequent storms and droughts** are more intense and disrupt flowering cycles, which led to the killing millions of butterflies.



## What is IUCN?

- The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** is a **global environmental organization that works for the conservation of biodiversity.**
- It also **supports and participates in environmental scientific research, promotes and helps implement national conservation legislation, policies, and practices,** and operates or manages thousands of field projects worldwide.
- Its membership includes more than 1,000 governmental and non-governmental organizations from more than 140 countries.
- It maintains the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, a comprehensive assessment of the current risk of extinction of thousands of plant and animal species.**
- The IUCN has been granted observer status at the [United Nations General Assembly.](#)
- The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. **Nine categories** extend from
  - NE (*Not Evaluated*) to EX (*Extinct*).
  - **Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) species are considered to be threatened with extinction.**



**UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Q. Which one of the following groups of animals belongs to the category of endangered species? (2012)**

- (a) Great Indian Bustard, Musk Deer, Red Panda and Asiatic Wild Ass  
(b) Kashmir Stag, Cheetal, Blue Bull and Great Indian Bustard  
(c) Snow Leopard, Swamp Deer, Rhesus Monkey and Saras (Crane)  
(d) Lion-tailed Macaque, Blue Bull, Hanuman Langur and Cheetal

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- A Critically Endangered species is one that is likely to extinct. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List is a critical indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity.
- Note: As per 2012 data, option (a) was correct.

Species	Current Status
Great Indian Bustard	Critically Endangered
Musk Deer	Endangered
Red Panda	Endangered
Asiatic Wild Ass	Near Threatened
Kashmir Stag	Critically Endangered
Cheetal	Least Concern
Blue Bull	Least Concern
Snow Leopard	Vulnerable
Rhesus Monkey	Least Concern
Saras (Crane)	Vulnerable
Lion Tailed Macaque	Endangered
Hanuman Langur	Least Concern

**Source: DTE**