

On a hot summer's day my wife and I finally came to visit Wild Ones in Neenah, Wisconsin.

We had driven by this place many times and had noticed the flowers, but didn't really know what it was all about. There was a sign that welcomed the public. I liked that the place was inviting!

Even as we pulled into the parking lot, my wife, Toni, and I we could see monarch butterflies flitting about in the air and on the wild flowers. This was a beautiful and unexpected sight, as the year, 2013, had been very poor for sighting monarch butterflies. Yet here were many. It was like an oasis for monarchs! My first thought was, "how come?" A small discreet sign with the title "Monarch Waystation" was alongside the trail of wild flowers and monarchs. It explained why these butterflies were here, and why these particular flowers had been planted here.

The seed of the idea was planted that day—I could plant wildflowers like these and attract butterflies as well. Over the next month I made many visits to Wild Ones, and was lucky to meet and speak with Wild Ones members. One of these happened to be Donna VanBuecken, Executive Director of Wild Ones, who was able to answer my many questions. She gave me a tour of the building and property, explaining all the while what Wild Ones was all about. I told her how much I appreciated what they were doing. The positive impact on the wildlife, and the beauty of the setting were inspirational to me, and I am sure to many others who stopped by.

I later found that I liked their Facebook page and I posted some of the images I had taken of the butterflies. This is how I found out about "Moving For Monarchs", or M4M, as Wild Ones posted a link with the video. I was blown away!

Yes, I love nature and am a nature photographer. It is my passion and I have a sense of belonging when out in nature. It touches my soul and my heart. So it was no surprise when I entered the M4M contest. Two winners would receive prints of the dancer on the hillside – so beautiful! The contestants needed to share M4M, and encourage others to get involved with planting milkweed, just as I had gotten involved! I posted some images on my website: <http://www.tommytroutphoto.com> and in the description I put a link to both Wild Ones and Moving for Monarchs.

I was stunned when I found out I was one of the two winners. I was honored!

It all started with a visit to the WILD Center! I started a "Monarch Waystation", and immediately sent in my form for certification. I bought many of the native plants from Wild Ones.

I hope you will somehow become inspired by my story or my images. I have hope that we can do the right thing for these beautiful creatures, that somehow make us feel good when we see them. Monarchs are like rainbows, disappearing even as we point to them and say how beautiful they are, and so special.

Thank you Wild Ones and M4M for inspiring me. In return I will inspire others and together we can bring back the large numbers of monarch butterflies!

Wild Ones and the Photographer

by Thomas Young

"Moving For Monarchs"

Editor note – I asked: Did one of your photos with the "I love moving for monarchs" make you a winner of M4M? Or, was it your "move" to promote M4M on your website? Or was it your "move to" photos monarchs that did it? Or maybe all three?
Thomas responded: So happy you like my story... I would say it was a combination of the things you mentioned.

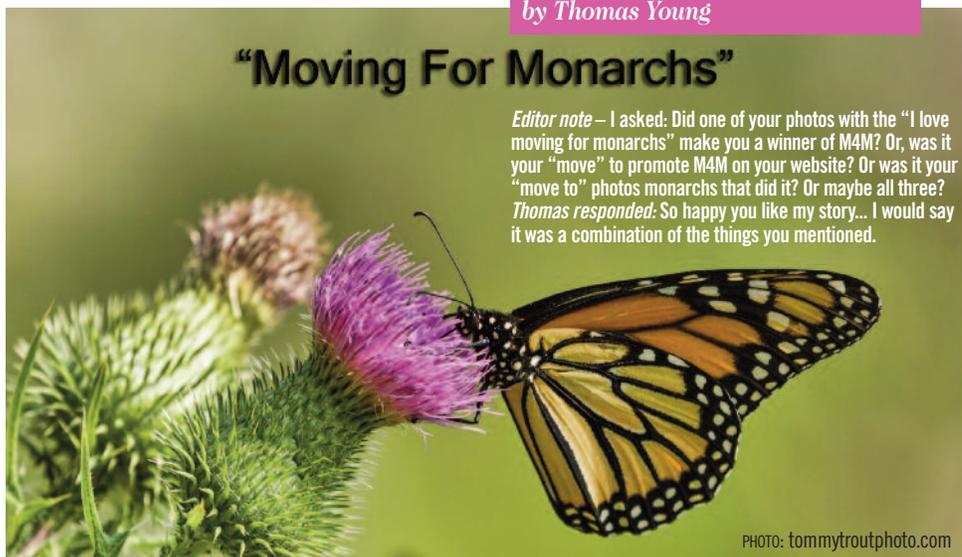
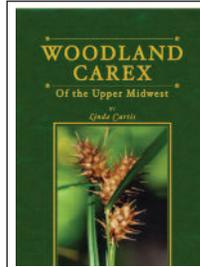


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