

## Kids tag monarchs

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If you want tips on how to catch a monarch butterfly and then tag it, the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center is the right place to be.

"It's going to be a lot easier to catch these guys if you wait for them to land," said Maria Anderson, teacher/naturalist at the nature center. "The best way to do this is you have to be kind of quick about it. You want to sneak up behind them, and then you go fast enough that the monarch ends up in the back of the net."

Anderson taught the third of four monarch tagging class at the nature center Tuesday afternoon for five children ages 9-12. Anderson caught the first monarch of the day using her large, white net.

She had all kinds of tips for kids to be successful at it: Make sure the net is closed so you don't lose the monarch; and you don't want to hurt it, so try cupping your hand around it and then squeezing the wings together gently.

For tagging, kids carefully took each monarch from the net, peeked under its wings to see if it has an identifying spot for gender, put a small, circular sticker on the wing to tag it and then let it go.

The group caught fewer than 10 monarchs, but the partly cloudy skies and a sun shower might have had something to do with that.

"They like it better when it's sunny out, so we might have a little less luck," Anderson said. "They hide from the rain."

Charlie Kanne, 11, had tagged butterflies before. He said he finds it fun to get an up-close look at the monarchs. He managed to catch a couple with his net, and he seemed relieved to get that first one out of the way.

"Yeah, I'm happy I caught one," Charlie said. "I wouldn't want to go home and have my little sister bug me about it all day."

His sister Ellen, 9, also netted a couple monarchs, and she got the first one before her older brother.

One trend of the day was that only male monarchs found their way into the netting. There was also quite a difference in the number of monarchs caught. The class last Friday nabbed more than 30 of them, Anderson said.

"They were getting so many that the kids just got sick of it," Anderson said.

That didn't seem to be a problem Tuesday. Children roamed and ran in the prairie grass as they tried to track down the flighty butterflies. Even riding along the trail in the cart, they constantly had their nets ready.

Before the kids went out into the prairie grass, they spent time inside learning about monarchs by reviewing their life cycle, from caterpillar to butterfly, how to identify males from females and how to properly tag them.

This time of year, monarchs migrate to Mexico, so when kids tag them here (and record the date, tag number and place) they can check the website [monarchwatch.org](http://monarchwatch.org) to see if their tagged monarchs are recovered in Mexico.