

Monarch butterfly, milkweed declines not driven by GMO crops, study shows

To get a better understanding of the monarch butterfly's future, Jack Boyle built a time machine.

Boyle, a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow of Environmental Science and Policy at William & Mary, has been using the web to mine millions of century-old botany records to track abundance patterns of milkweed in America. Contrary to claims made by scientists and activists for decades, he's learned that genetically modified crops are [not the main culprit](#) for the decline of milkweed, the principal host plant for monarchs.

[Editor's note: Read [Viewpoint: There's no one 'butterfly-killing bogeyman' to blame for declining monarch populations](#) to learn more.]

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[T]he researchers were able to track the relative abundance of both monarchs and milkweeds for more than a century, from 1900 to 2016. They found that both monarchs and milkweeds increased during the early 20th century and recent declines are actually part of a much longer trend beginning around 1950. "Herbicide resistant crops are clearly not the only culprit, and likely not even the primary culprit," [the paper states](#). "Not only did monarch and milkweed declines begin decades before GM crops were introduced, but other variables, particularly a decline in the number of farms, predict common milkweed trends more strongly over the period studied."

Read full, original article: [Research: Monarch butterfly declines began long before GMOs](#)