

# Monarch butterflies listed as endangered

**WASHINGTON:** The monarch butterfly (*pic*) fluttered a step closer to extinction as scientists put the iconic orange-and-black insect on the endangered list because of its fast dwindling numbers.

“It’s just a devastating decline,” said Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University who was not involved in the new listing.

“This is one of the most recognizable butterflies in the world.”

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature added the migrating monarch butterfly for the first time to its “red list” of threatened species and categorised it as

“endangered” – two steps from extinct.

The group estimates that the population of monarch butterflies in North America has declined between 22% and 72% over 10 years, depending on the measurement method.

“What we’re worried about is the rate of decline,” said Nick Haddad, a conservation biologist at Michigan State University.

“It’s very easy to imagine how very quickly this butterfly could become even more imperilled.”

Haddad estimates that the population of monarch butterflies he

studies in the eastern United States has declined between 85% and 95% since the 1990s.

Emma Pelton of Xerces Society, said the butterflies are imperilled by loss of habitat and increased use of herbicides and pesticides for agriculture, as well as climate change.

“There are things people can do to help,” she said, including planting milkweed, a plant that the caterpillars depend upon.

The United States has not listed monarch butterflies under the Endangered Species Act, but several environmental groups believe it should be listed. — AP

