

Announcement

MONARCH BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

After forty-one years of research, commencing in the summer of 1935, the overwintering site of the eastern population (east of the Rocky Mountains) in North America of the monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus plexippus*, was discovered in the Neovolcanic Plateau, a series of volcanic mountains sometimes referred to as the Great Cross Range, in southern Mexico. This unique phenomenon was first reported in the August, 1976 issue of the National Geographic Magazine - the field expedition responsible for the discovery being sponsored by the Committee on Research and Exploration of the National Geographic Society and the National Research Council of Canada.

Since countless millions of migrant monarch butterflies congregate each year in various locations (loci), ambiguously referred to as "sites" by some authors, covering the branches and trunks of over a thousand trees in one locus, the vulnerability of the butterflies became apparent to us. The roosting trees, consisting of various species of conifers, might be destroyed by fire, that which already posed a serious possibility on one occasion, or excess lumbering practices not to mention the hazards created by visitors intent on taking photographs.

The importance of protecting the overwintering monarchs in the various loci throughout the Mexican Site was brought to the attention of the Mexican authorities with special attention to the possibility of fire.

As a result of our working closely with the officials of Mexican television, Televisa de Mexico, this unique phenomenon was shown to the citizens of Mexico emphasizing the need for protecting the various loci where the monarchs congregated. The response to this appeal was most gratifying; hundreds of letters were received by the President of Televisa, Miguel Aleman, requesting protection for the monarch butterflies and suggesting that such areas be set aside as conservation areas.

As a result of meetings held with Dr. Ricardo Enriquez, Special Consultant to the Subsecretario Forestal y de La Fauna de Mexico, a law has now been passed declaring all areas between the levels of 2500 - 3500 m. of all mountains of the Neovolcanic Plateau as wildlife sanctuaries. These areas are now being patrolled by trained armed guards. A fine of \$800.00 U.S. is imposed on anyone entering the protected areas without official sanction.

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