

Monty the Monarch

*By CC Huffhines*

My name is Monty. I am a Monarch butterfly.

Most humans react with excitement when they see me. They admire my large wing spread and the orange and black colors that are brilliant to view.

I normally spend my summers in Denver. However, the past summers have been exceedingly hot in Denver for my needs, and I have flown north to Canada. That is an inconvenience for me, as it adds mileage for my fall migration to the warm winter Butterfly Reserve in Michoacán, Mexico. I normally fly 2500 miles to my winter abode, now the flight is about 3000 miles.

I am particularly fond of my Denver residence because CC keeps milkweed blooming in his garden. This food is the one choice that I must have. In past years, there was plentiful milkweed all along my migration route through the Midwest and Texas. This area has been overplanted with "people food" and this has eliminated much of the natural milkweed that makes my long trip a safe trip.

Just one word about my diet of milkweed. Most of my enemies find milkweed distasteful. The food makes me poisonous to those enemies. Plus, I like the taste of this food. It offers many blessings, for which I'm grateful. Not only has milkweed been plowed up in too many places, in Mexico, local farmers are deforesting the land where we winter. Government regulations are ignored by many of the poor citizens in the area, who often cut trees from the forest at nighttime to avoid discovery. A futile attempt has been made with an official "MONARCH BUTTERFLY BIOSPHERE RESERVE" ... but is a failed effort. Only recently has the location of this area been disclosed to the public, though native Mexicans living in the area have secretly known about it for a long time.

If you should visit the Reserve during the winter, you will see an amazing sight. Literally millions of butterflies from east of the Rockies, including me, have gathered in the remaining trees. Each of us have small claws to hang on to the tree. Often there are so many Monarchs on one tree, that it bends to the ground from the weight.

As for me, once I reach the Reserve, I prefer to concentrate in getting fertilized so that my eggs will produce strong Monarchs, able to withstand the massive flights of immigration. Then, once my egg-bearing period is past, I bask in the warm heat as I hang from the tree. One day, I will join my expired fellow Monarchs on the ground beneath the trees, adding to the sight of colorful dead Monarch butterflies.