

flowers. They have come up with a very simple solution of syrup in a white container with holes cut out of it. If you squinted and pretended you are a butterfly hovering over the top, well, it could look like a flower!

I was so taken with these fabulously coloured creatures, flashing turquoise and irridescent landing on my shoulder, that when the rest of the family arrived from NZ later that morning, I insisted they return to the sanctuary with me, so I could share it with them. I was nearly going to say it was the highlight of my visit to Kuranda, but I have to say in all fairness, my sister was a beautiful bride.

Shelley

My Monarch Station

Mid-summer I realised my Monarch caterpillars were not surviving outside due to the praying mantis and wasps. Not wanting to kill anything I moved my caterpillars indoors. I find fresh Swan Plant daily for the hungry little munching machines, and trail the branches of plant to lean against a dry branch. When the caterpillars want to turn into chrysalis form they generally head up this stick and do their bit.

They are amazingly trusting... sometimes I have put a new release outside on a blossom and they have remained there for a day. If the weather changes and they are still there when it is getting cooler or rain is coming down, they happily climb back on to my finger and appear pleased to be back inside again for another night.

If you are rearing Monarchs indoors, it would be helpful if you could note your releases and whether they are male or female. An Australian entomologist is interested in hearing about the numbers we are releasing.

Gill



Snippets from Gill



Trustee **Gill**, husband Eldon and Rosie.

 An ancient Indian legend says that to make a wish come true is to whisper it to a butterfly. What a lovely thought! I can well understand how that legend has come about – butterflies are such graceful, beautiful and ethereal insects.

 Why are our butterflies so important? Unusual decreases or increases in a species, or the arrivals of foreign species, can be signs of climate change and the loss of green spaces.

Butterflies are extremely important to biodiversity. Or to put it succinctly in the tag line from the film 'The Butterfly Effect': '*Change one thing, change everything*'.

Monarch Butterfly NZ Trust

September 2005 Newsletter

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Report to Members

Thank you! We have raised over \$5,000! This income is made up of 151 members, donations for seeds \$903.50, stickers \$239.80, and other donations \$850.75. And it goes on...

In forming the Trust parts of the deed were rewritten to gain donee status as a charity. This means that all donations are fully **tax deductible**.

Jacqui and entomologist Peter Maddison will next week be at Butterfly Bay gathering information which will not only be useful in the submission to local government and the developer in their plans for Butterfly Bay – but will also set a precedent for the protection of other NZ overwintering sites of the Monarch. Findings will be on the website as they are published.

We are working with a pupil at a small school who has learning disabilities, and recently sent off some eggs so that he could get a head start on spring. We received a photograph of their Swan Plant – amazing. It is exciting to hear of the relationship that many schools have with the Monarch. I would love to develop a set of resources for schools, freely available from our website. We have several plans in mind to help promote and protect the Monarch in other parts of NZ.

We welcome new members, and if you know of anyone who would like seeds of the Giant Swan Plant, we still have some available although stocks are running low. Two members are offering seeds from the website too - in Wellington and Nelson. The website has proved very useful as far as networking goes.

Watch our website for special items for sale! Currently we have beautiful bumper stickers for sale at \$2.50 each, and soon we will have two styles of T-shirt for those of you who want to show your support of the Monarchy everywhere you go.

Gill, Jacqui and Shelley - Trustees

Snippets from Gill

 When planting nectar plants for the monarchs, plant them in sunny positions, plant in masses of one colour and monarchs seemingly enjoy yellows and purples.

 Don't use pesticides, herbicides, fungicides. This includes slug and snail pellets.



Shelley, Jacqui and Helen, Trustees
(Helen was leaving to travel overseas).

How to help the Monarch right now

At this time of year, you will no doubt be seeing Monarchs on sunny, warm days, when they will come out from their overwintering sites and gather nectar. Monarchs that have not mated before the wintry weather comes will enter a state of diapause, which is essentially a period of suspended animation. They do not breed, but overwinter, just sipping on nectar on warm days, otherwise aggregating or clustering in trees

There are fewer flowering plants in the winter, but if you plant for the butterflies, they will reward you on days when you've got the winter blues!

Have you got flowering shrubs such as Azaleas, Bottlebrush, Buddleia, Lilac, Poinsettia, Viburnum; perennials such as Daisies, Dimorpotheca and Heliotrope/Cherry Pie; and annuals like Alyssum, Chrysanthemum, Lantana (*L. amara* or *L. montevidensis*) and Marigold, in your garden? Then there are herbs such as Anise Hyssop, someone called it a 'Butterfly Magnet'. Weeds too, like Dandelion!

Colour attracts butterflies, and if you want Monarchs a formal garden where 'weeds are a worry' is not for you. Nature does not equate with formality and rules!

At this time of year, too, it is important to look after your milkweed species.

One of the biggest problems our Swan Plant and Giant Swan Plant has in Russell is it is being destroyed by aphids. I recently took to mine with soapy water (dish water works fine), spraying the colonies of aphids. I may have killed a few Monarch eggs but the plant has come away again. I noticed some aphids had already been predated by the aphids' biological control, and there were ladybirds too on the plants doing their bit, killing off aphids. But the aphids had been in high numbers.

Snails are also a problem. Best controls are handpicking them off your plant, but you need to do this at night-time. Or you can pop citrus fruit skins in your garden (like igloos), and then empty them out (into the middle of the compost heap) every morning. Snails seem to shelter under them, and it's easy to collect them and destroy!

Or put them on your lawn for the blackbirds and thrushes!

It is all part of Nature's cycle. Everything is connected – every plant and insect, larger animals too – has its predators and parasites, and it too is a pest to others. There are surges and ebbs in the dynamics of how each living thing relates to others. A population explosion in the Monarch life cycle means that the Swan Plant suffers, which means that less Monarch eggs survive, and new Swan Plants grow and thrive. If we loved the Swan Plant more than the Monarchs we'd be out there shooing the butterflies away from our precious milkweed!

Another good comparison is when we grow cabbages and broccoli etc we frown at the White Butterfly which comes into our garden, the larvae of which will destroy our brassica crops.

People say that Monarch larvae have been attacked by praying mantis and ladybirds,

If you've printed this out and read it... why not pass this to a friend, put it on the community noticeboard, give it to a school...

but there you go... It's only natural! It's bringing it all into balance so that the ones we favour fare better than the ones we are not so fond of. Nature is all about balance.

If you use a chemical spray to control the aphids, you're going to have healthy-looking plants but your Monarchs will die. So try the soapy water, dodging round Monarch eggs and larvae, and you'll be helping the Monarchs. Or you can try Confidor (kills sucking insects, not caterpillars).

Eggs have been laid on our Swan Plants throughout this (mild) winter. Right now I have 20-something healthy caterpillars crawling around my lounge, and turning into chrysalides. If they were outside they would not have survived - perhaps the cold weather would have killed them or they would have been predated by wasps. Inside they have had much more of a chance (but it hasn't helped my housework!).

For some years we Monarch-lovers in Russell have cultivated milkweed in a garden owned privately, by an absentee landlord. Just prior to the landlord's return, the man who manages his property sends in 'the gardeners'. Gardeners? I don't think so! These 'Galoots in boots' trampled all over the daffodils, and all of our caterpillar food was dug up, destroyed, discarded, dumped – despite our pleas. THEN, they sprayed! Neatness and tidiness and DEATH everywhere. We were desolate!

However, on Tuesday the Northland Age put on their front page that we needed Swan Plant, and hey presto – we've had offers of branches from all over the north to feed our very hungry caterpillars.!

Remember... *Monarchs rule!*

Jacqui

Visiting Butterflies

In August I visited Kuranda in Queensland to attend my sister's wedding and having already heard about the Australian Butterfly Sanctuary there, decided I had to visit and see the butterflies for myself. What a fabulous place! It originally opened in 1987 and gained a place in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest butterfly aviary in the world. To date it still holds the record as the largest aviary in the Southern Hemisphere.

The sanctuary is owned and operated by Paul Wright. He was fascinated by the diversity of the tropical butterflies he saw while living in Malaysia and wanted to create an environment where people would have the opportunity to experience these creatures in all their gracefulness and glory. What a fabulous job he has made of this dream!

The sanctuary does not cover a huge area, but you are encouraged to slow down because the butterflies will actually land on you as you stand and watch their antics. Of course it does help if you wear floral colours, red, white or hot pink.

Staff take regular tours, explaining at several sites the habits of different butterflies, feeding, life-cycles and the behind-the-scenes work they do to ensure they have sufficient food year-round for the ravenous creatures. In the real world you would need tonnes of