

Butterflies Santa Cruz' Flying Tourists

10/8/81
By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel Staff Writer

If you thought tourist season was over, think again. There are thousands descending on Santa Cruz. The only difference is these tourists fly and are orange and black.

Clouds of Monarch butterflies are once again fluttering into local gardens and, specifically, Natural Bridges State Beach on the city's west side.

A special celebration — the 2nd Annual Welcome Back Monarchs Day — will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at Natural Bridges. A Monarch banner designed by Park Ranger Lynn Swank will be raised, and entertainment will be provided by the park's Five-M Band.

The event is open to the public.

At Natural Bridges, Monarchs gather for winter protection and feeding in the park's small canyon of eucalyptus trees. While not as well known as Pacific Grove where they gather in the fragrant Monterey cypress, Natural Bridges annually gets some 100,000 Monarchs.

Park Ranger Alexander Weiss said the butterflies are just beginning to arrive in greater numbers. He estimated 5,000 to 10,000 now, with a "fairly good number" expected by mid-October. The Monarchs will winter here through December and sometime as long as March, coming from as far north as Canada.

Weiss is expecting some 200,000 butterfly watchers this season. They will include hundreds of school groups and educational field trips.

Rangers will waive the usual \$2-per-vehicle fee for butterfly watchers only, explained Weiss. A limit of 30 minutes is set, however, to view the Monarchs.

The best time to come, he added, is when it's warm and sunny. The Monarchs will then be flying about in great numbers feeding on the eucalyptus blooms.

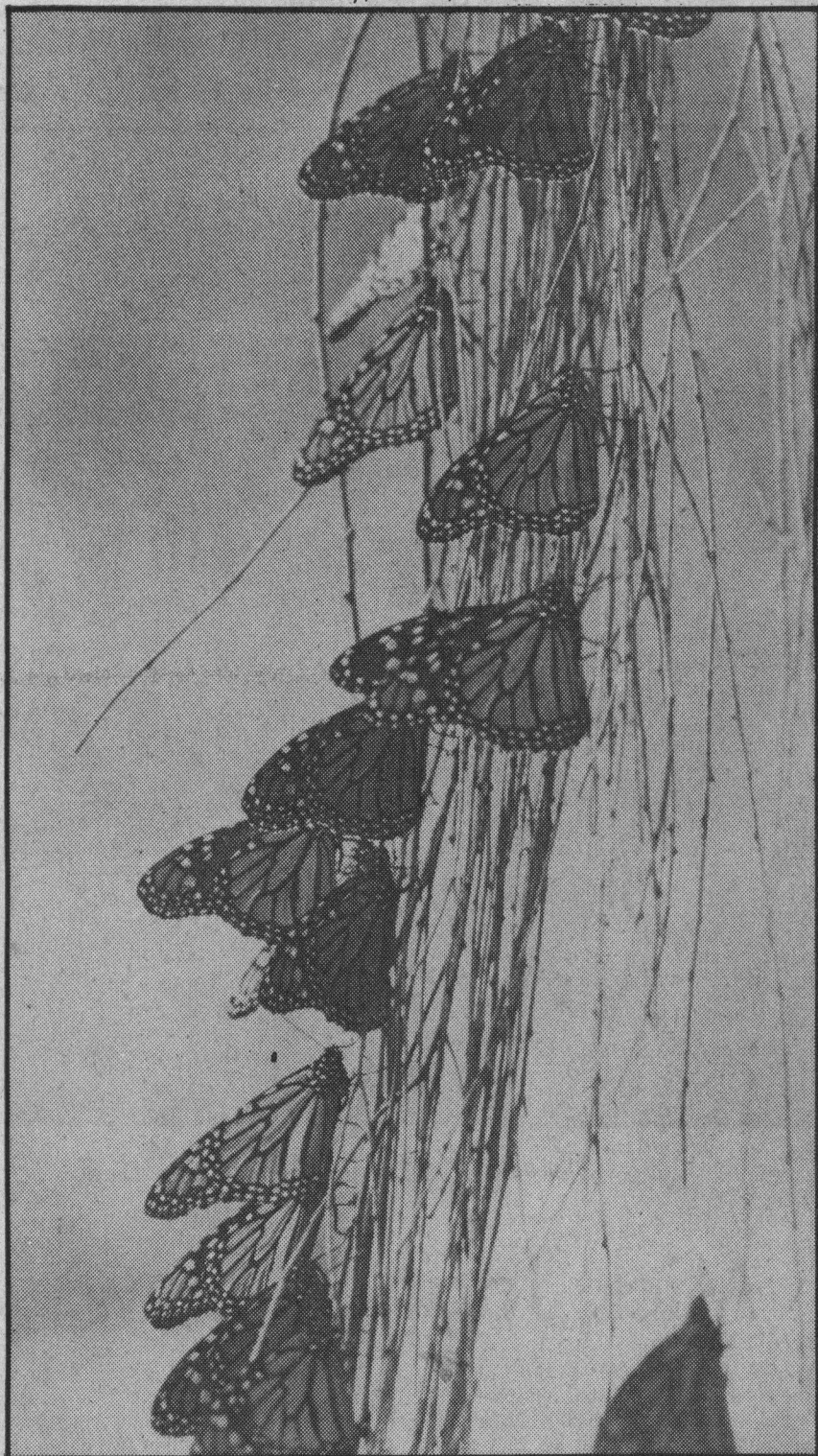
As the weather cools, Monarchs will form dense clusters in the trees. Called "shingling," each butterfly hangs its wings down over the one below it for protection from the cold and predators.

They will usually begin to form these clusters when temperatures drop to 55 degrees or lower. The importance is evident when temperatures drop to about 40 degrees. Then, Monarchs actually can't move at all and "shingling" can save them from falling prey to predators.

There is a special Butterfly Trail that leads directly into the canyon. It is open every day from 8 a.m. to dusk.

Natural Bridges is located at 2531 West Cliff Drive. For information, call 423-4609.

Thursday, Oct. 8, 1981 — Santa Cruz Sentinel—23



Monarchs gather at Natural Bridges