

# Monarchs show up in Santa Cruz in masses



KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL

A monarch butterfly rests on an eucalyptus tree branch at Natural Bridges State Beach on Sunday evening.

By SHANNA MCCORD

smccord@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Monarch butterflies have migrated to the eucalyptus grove of Natural Bridges State Beach this fall in numbers park officials haven't seen in recent years.

The recognizable black and gold insects flutter like specks among the tall trees, drawing hundreds of visitors armed with telephoto lenses and binoculars to check them out until their departure to the north in March.

Natural Bridges interpreters, who lead free tours of the butterfly habitat every Saturday and Sunday, estimate there are 4,600 monarchs settled in Santa Cruz this year.

They said the butterflies were painstakingly counted one by one.

"Some say that's underrated and it's more like 5,000," Natural Bridges

interpretive specialist Emily Coletta said during a tour Sunday. "It's more than usual."

Monarch butterflies are known for the mass migration that brings millions of them to California and Mexico each winter. North American monarchs are the only butterflies that make such a massive journey — up to 3,000 miles.

The insects must begin the journey each fall ahead of cold weather, which can kill them if they lag too long.

To witness the tiny insect that makes such a journey is fascinating to folks such as John Farnsworth, a professor of environmental studies at Santa Clara University, who visited Natural Bridges on Sunday.

Farnsworth set up his camera and tripod on Sunday to get a good, steady look.

SEE MONARCH ON B2

## MONARCH

Continued from B1

"I'm just interested in migrations and how they work," he said. "For the monarchs' migration, the ones who start it don't end it. Their grandchildren end up finishing it. It's fascinating to me."

Half Moon Bay resident Linda Lewis was also among the audience gathered in the grove with a camera and binoculars around her neck.

"When you first come here you don't see them because they're in clumps and it's cold so they don't move," said Lewis, who arrived early Sunday. "They're beautiful and the fact that they migrate so far is amazing."

Only monarchs born in late summer or early fall make the migration, and they make only one round trip. By the time next year's winter migration begins, several summer generations will have lived and died and it will be last year's great grandchildren that make the trip.

Yet somehow these new generations know the way, and follow the same routes their ancestors took — sometimes even returning to the same tree, parks officials said.

Bruce Rozgo said he remembers monarch butterflies showing up in his backyard as a kid in Chicago every August.

They would hang around only a couple of weeks, then disappear.

Rozgo said he never knew where the butterflies went until recently.

"It's just incredible they



KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL

Natural Bridges State Beach was packed with observers on Sunday as monarch butterflies return to Santa Cruz.



KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL

Thousands of monarchs clutter an eucalyptus tree branch at Natural Bridges State Beach on Sunday as thousands more flutter throughout the park.

know how to do this," Rozgo said. "This is very interesting."

Follow Sentinel reporter Shanna McCord at [Twitter.com/scnews-mom](https://twitter.com/scnews-mom)