

RECREATION FESTIVITIES

Monarch butterflies rule outdoors

Butterflies
Weather provides a chance to see them before they migrate

By Jessica M. Pasko

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SANTA CRUZ — The dry, sunny weather might not have skiers or farmers rejoicing, but it's a boon for outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

At Natural Bridges State Park Saturday, people gathered to catch a glimpse of the monarch butterflies that migrate here each fall before they leave the area in a few weeks.

The brilliant orange-and-black butterflies migrate south to Mexico or to coastal California to spend the winter, often traveling thousands of miles to find the overwintering areas used by their ancestors.

The monarchs arrive in Santa Cruz around October each year and will begin the next step of their migration in the upcoming weeks.

The visitors' center at the park will be conducting guided monarch tours

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Migration Festival at Natural Bridges

WHEN: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Feb. 11

WHERE: Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz

COST: Admission to the festival is free, although regular parking fees will be in effect.

INFORMATION: 831-423-4609

TOURS: Guided monarch tours are held at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays

at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays until Feb. 11, when the park holds its annual Migration Festival event, according to Martha Nitzberg, the lead interpreter at Natural Bridges.

More than 20 community organizations and agencies will take part in the festival, which will feature hands-on activities and information on a wide variety of migrating animals.

The Fish and Wildlife Department, for instance, will be hosting a game about endangered species, and there

5pm 18-12
will be both taxidermy and live animals for children and adults to learn from.

The event is designed with all ages in mind, Nitzberg said.

There will be talks and lectures geared more toward adults as well as activities, stories and arts and crafts from the younger participants.

While the festival will focus on all different species of animals that migrate, it serves largely as a sort of farewell party for the monarchs as they begin leaving to head north again.

"People come from all over to see them," Nitzberg said.

Visitors to the park can also purchase a packet of milkweed seeds to plant as a way of attracting more butterflies. Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on the more than a dozen varieties of the plant, which isn't native to Santa Cruz.

At the peak of the season, right before Thanksgiving, there were an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 monarchs making their temporary home at Natural Bridges, Nitzberg said.