



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA INC.

NEWSLETTER

No. 38: July 2010

WANDERER (MONARCH) BUTTERFLIES

Reports of Wanderer (Monarch) butterflies congregating in large masses between Strathalbyn and Mt.Barker and in the Onkaparinga Gorge have been received this month.

Here are some images provided by a member of the Friends of the Onkaparinga Gorge who was with the working party on Tuesday morning 9:00 am on 5/7/2010 and was greeted with an amazing spectacle, the likes of which he had never witnessed in Australia before.

He writes: "At the bottom of the Onkaparinga Gorge there was a large Gum tree and it was absolutely covered in thousands of Monarch Butterflies, hanging in long draping masses, really quite a spectacle to behold. There are always Monarch in the park in reasonable numbers, but this was something quite different. Perhaps this is not an uncommon occurrence, but new to my eyes....hope you enjoy the pictures".

The caterpillar food plant of the Wanderer (Monarch) butterfly is the introduced cotton bush, *Gomphocarpus cancellatus* (syn. *Asclepias rotundifolia*) Broad-leaf Cotton-bush, (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*) Narrow-leaf Cotton-bush and (*Asclepias curassavica*) Red-head Cotton-bush. As these plants are weeds, they are often removed from nature and road reserves.

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The wonderful sight of these butterflies congregating in the Adelaide hills has once again ignited the debate of whether to pull out the caterpillar food plants in parks and reserves because it is an introduced species or leave the plant for the butterflies.

See page 3 and 4 for a reprint of the article generated for the S.A. Museum exhibition and website '*Wanderer Butterfly Friend and Foe, the case FOR and AGAINST*'.

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA. INC. for membership enquiries and annual membership payments (\$10):
Treasurer: 5 Oakleigh Road, MARION. 5043 S.AUST.

2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

this year will be held on 7th September
in the Clarence Room at the CLARENCE PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE,
72-74 East Avenue, Black Forest (just next to the railway line) at 7.30pm
please bring a plate of supper

AGENDA

PRESENT:
APOLOGIES:
PREVIOUS MINUTES: 10th August 2009

CORRESPONDENCE:

BUSINESS ARISING: Life Membership, report from committee

REPORTS

Chairman - David Keane
Treasurer - Mike Moore
Membership - Jan Forrest

NEW BUSINESS - please provide a note containing information on your proposed new business, to the Secretary (see address below) at least seven days prior to the meeting.

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman:
Secretary:
Minute Secretary
Treasurer:
Committee Members (some jobs include):
web master
program co-ordinator
newsletter editor
librarian
Appointment of Auditor:

Any OTHER BUSINESS
2011 meetings
Butterfly Gardening Promotions

Close of meeting

GUEST SPEAKER: Jan Forrest and Vanesa Duran "using butterflies to promote, create and conserve habitat in gardens and native reserves"

Over the last couple of years members of the committee have talked to numerous groups to promote butterfly gardening and some members have seen an original talk. Over time, the talk has evolved to concentrate now on using butterflies as the vehicle to promote the conservation and creation of habitat for all animals, in particular invertebrates that visit our gardens and native reserves.

Following the talk we are keen to hold a discussion so that members present can put their ideas forward regarding the direction of Butterfly Conservation SA in South Australia. We are in a unique position in that our flagship are an animal that most people love to see and want to ensure survive, so how can we continue to use this opportunity to promote conervation and the retention of biodiversity? **Your ideas are important to us.**

Please join us for supper

NOMINATION FORM FOR BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA 2010-2011 AGM

Please post completed nomination forms to: Secretary BCSA C/- SAMuseum, North Terrace Adelaide. 5000
to arrive prior to 2nd September or bring signed form/s with you to the meeting.

I (name of nominator) being a member of Butterfly Conservation SA hereby nominate:

..... please print

to the position of Chairman / Secretary / Minute Secretary / Treasurer / committee member / web master / guest speaker co-ordinator / newsletter editor (please circle) for the 2011 year

Signed: Nominator

Seconded by:

Nomination accepted:

THE WANDERER (MONARCH) BUTTERFLY

The case FOR and AGAINST

The Wanderer or Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus* is a favourite amongst Adelaide residents since its introduction to South Australia in the mid 1800's. The plants that the caterpillars of this butterfly feed upon however, are considered a weed in reserves and roadsides.

A foreign butterfly eats an introduced food

In Australia the caterpillar of this butterfly are the introduced cotton bushes, *Gomphocarpus cancelatus* (syn. *Asclepias rotundifolia*) Broad-leaf Cotton-bush, *Gomphocarpus fruticosus* Narrow-leaf Cotton-bush and *Asclepias curassavica* Red-head Cotton-bush. As these plants are weeds, they are often removed from nature and road reserves.

The caterpillars of the native Lesser Wanderer *Danaus petilia* also eat introduced Milkweed plants. However this native butterfly also feeds on *Cynanchum floribundum* Desert Cynanchum, *Marsdenia australis* Native Pear and *Rhyncharrhena linearis* Bush Bean in the north of South Australia.

The lesser Wanderer

The caterpillars of these two butterflies look similar.

The Wanderer caterpillars are larger with black, white and yellow stripes. The Lesser Wanderer caterpillars also have black and white stripes. However the yellow areas are elongated spots in broad, black stripes that span the body.

Both pupa look similar too. Both can be green with gold decorations, turning darker as the butterfly is near to emerging. However the Lesser Wanderer pupa can also be pink and is smaller than the Wanderer pupa.

The case FOR the Wanderer

This butterfly has been in Adelaide since the mid 1800s. It is probably one of the favourite and most recognised butterflies in South Australia, indeed in the world. If all of this caterpillar's food plant is removed, then this butterfly will become extinct in South Australia and as the Lesser Wanderer also relies on the introduced swan plant and milk weed this species may also become extinct.

To retain the Wanderer butterfly in Adelaide, you

Adult Wanderer butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) photo Jan Forrest and its caterpillar photo Lindsay Hunt.

Adult Lesser Wanderer butterfly (*Danaus petilia*) photo Robert Fisher and its caterpillar photo Lindsay Hunt and pupae of the Wanderer (left) photo Jan Forrest and Lesser Wanderer, photo Robert Fisher.



could plant their host plant in your garden.

Cotton-bushes look quite attractive in urban gardens, although the milky sap can cause irritation if touched.

If you are concerned about the plant escaping into a native reserve nearby then remove the seed-pods before they germinate. You will then retain one or two plants, thus providing food for the wanderer caterpillar, but no more will grow around the area. The presence of this butterfly also acts as a biological control of this non-indigenous plant.

The caterpillars are easy to rear. When a caterpillar turns into a butterfly it makes a green pupa case with gold spots around one end. The case can be suspended by the silken web from a curtain rod or in any suitable place. When the wing colour can be seen through the case it is nearly time for the butterfly to emerge.

Perhaps you could look for caterpillars of the Wanderer butterfly to see if you can find any that are feeding on a native South Australian plant. We do have native milkweeds in South Australia (*Cyanthum* and *Sarcostemma* spp.) and Wanderers eat plants belonging to these two genera in the Americas. However no records exist in Australia of this butterfly feeding on these plants and unfortunately the chances of finding a native host plant for this butterfly are considered remote.

Contact the Discovery Centre of the South Australian Museum if you have recorded the caterpillars of the Wanderer butterfly feeding on plants other than the introduced Cotton-bush or Swan Plant.

The case AGAINST the Wanderer

The Wanderer is not a native butterfly. Its foodplant, the milk-weed is a non-indigenous plant which has become a pest in many areas of the coast and the foothills. This problem is compounded by people who grow this plant to encourage these spectacular butterflies to breed. In this way both the butterfly and the plant have been spread to areas of the state where neither of them occurred in the past.

The milkweed is named because of its poisonous sticky sap. It can cause eye and skin problems in adults if they come in contact with it. The sap, if eaten or chewed is poisonous to children and family pets.

It is doubtful we will ever get rid of this undesirable plant from our bushland areas and therefore the butterfly will always have a food source. The fad for growing milkweed plants to attract the Wanderer may be responsible for the spread of this plant.

The question that those of us who are proud of our Australian native bushland ask is: should we let a plant loose in the bush, simply so an introduced butterfly (albeit a pretty one) can survive?

This article was written originally by members of BCSA for the SAMuseum exhibition 'Bringing the Butterflies Back' and is available on the Museum website: www.samuseum.sa.gov.au (What's on/Online Exhibitions/Butterfly Watch).

NOTE: The committee had hoped to organise a day trip into the Onkaparinga Gorge however subsequent visits by members of the 'Friends' report that the butterflies were no longer on the same tree and as access to the gorge is limited and terrain steep with no guarantee of seeing the butterflies, the trip was cancelled.

If you are planning to walk in the Gorge and would like further information please feel free to contact Secretary Jan Forrest for further details 82978230.



Cotton bush, *Gomphocarpus cancellatus*
(syn. *Asclepias rotundifolia*) Photo: RHFisher

COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE - Vanesa Duran-Racero

My name is Vanesa and have been a member of BCSA for over a year and half now. My life passion is nature and have, for as long as I can remember, always been driven to conserve (and preserve when possible) our valuable natural treasures from the impacts of human activities. I have strived to do this in different ways, including campaigning for conservation and liaising with local groups, which are activities I thoroughly enjoy.

I believe I have always had a soft spot for the invertebrate world. In fact I clearly remember the fascination I would hold for ladybirds, grasshoppers or earthworms as a little girl growing up in north-eastern Spain. Granted, I would then go ahead and feed my pet-duck with some of the earthworms I had previously examined, although I just considered this a natural part of the web of life as opposed to a cruel move on my part.

Upon completion of my undergraduate studies in Biology in 2003 and subsequently moving to Adelaide with my partner Patrick, I quickly became involved in a number of nature conservation organisations and held a couple of volunteer positions, which helped me quickly settle to life in Australia. My nagging interest then led me to post-grad studies in environmental management with a particular focus on urban ecology and community attitudes to invertebrate conservation. This same captivation for invertebrates will see me starting a PhD in invertebrate conservation at Adelaide University next month, position that will no doubt still grant me time to be involved with BCSA and its fantastic work to help raise awareness into the fascinating world of biodiversity and its need for conservation.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED

We were delighted to welcome Vanesa to the committee last year as she brought youth and enthusiasm as well as knowledge. However, **whatever your age or interest please consider joining the committee** as last year we struggled to get a quorum to most meetings.

It is not an arduous task. We hold five meetings a year (bi-monthly) and the meetings are very sociable as we usually order a pizza and occasionally someone brings a bottle of wine! The meetings are now held in a committee members home, most recently at Jan's at Clarence Park.

If you want to make a difference to conserving the environment please **do not leave the decision making to the same one or two people.**

MONARCH BUTTERFLY NZ TRUST

BCSA is a reciprocal member of the Monarch Butterfly NZ Trust and receive their newsletter. The newsletter contains interesting facts regarding the habits of the Monarch butterfly in New Zealand as well as hints for gardeners. The Trust has also been conducting a tagging program to map the distribution of this species.

If you are interested in joining or finding out about their meetings (if you plan to visit NZ) please contact the: Monarch Butterfly NZ Trust C/- NZ Post, RUSSELL 0242 NZ or email members@monarch.lorg.nz. Their website address is: www.monarch.org.nz.

Membership costs are: NZ\$20 for those that received their newsletter electronically and NZ\$25 for posted newsletters. Their 2011 calendar will be available shortly for NZ\$20.

CAN YOU HELP?

At our next promotional stall at the 'Adelaide Gardening and Outdoor Renovation Show', Allan Scott Park, Morphettville Racecourse 22 - 24 October, 2010.

also

**at the next Australian Plants Society stall in October (dates to be advised)
Contact Jan Forrest for details and entry/parking tickets. Phone: 82978230**

If you are able to sell some Butterfly Gardening books please contact Secretary Jan Forrest 82978230

BUSH FOR LIFE INTRODUCTORY AND ADVANCED WORKSHOPS for 2010

If anyone is interested in attending one of these workshops the dates are as follows:

One Day Introductory workshops 9.00am - 4.00pm

7 August - Gawler

19 August - Burnside

4 September - Brooklyn Park

18 September - Belair

12 October - Mount Barker

21 October - Willunga

5 November - Stirling

Other courses include:

Plant identification - Theory

24 July Stirling

24 September Brooklyn Park

Native Grasses basic identification and management

11 Nov Brooklyn Park

20 Nov Mount Barker

Applications from BCSA must be endorsed by our President or Secretary.

If you are interested in receiving more information contact Secretary Jan Forrest

BCSA LIFE MEMBERSHIP

At the last AGM it was agreed to introduce a Life Membership category of membership and the committee were charged with the responsibility of setting a Life Membership Fee. At the December 2009 committee meeting it was agreed that the fee for Life Membership should be \$200 and be implemented from the 2010/2011 financial year.

Unfortunately this information was omitted from the Membership Renewal notices sent out with the last Newsletter. Accordingly should any member wish to apply for life membership, fees paid for the 2010/2011 financial year and any fees paid in advance may be deducted from the Life Membership fee forwarded this financial year only.

If you are unsure of your financial status please email Secretary Jan Forrest forrestjan@adam.com.au for a statement.

APPLICATION FOR LIFE MEMBERSHIP

I hereby apply for Life Membership of Butterfly Conservation SA Inc. and enclose \$200 Life Membership fee.

Name: Phone No:

Address:

Email: please print.

Please photocopy and post/direct debit with Life membership fees to:

Treasurer, Butterfly Conservation SA, 5 Oakleigh Road, MARION. 5043 SOUTH AUSTRALIA

OR pay by direct debit to: BSB 805-022: Account No: 02247994: Account Name: Butterfly Conservation SA Inc.

(if you direct debit please email Mike on mima@esc.net.au with date, time and amount of transfer and email (or post) this form summarizing your details).

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA Inc.

Chairman: David Keane

Secretary and Newsletter Editor: Jan Forrest OAM C/- South Australian Museum, North Terrace, ADELAIDE, 5000 ph H (08) 82978230.

email <jan.forrest@samuseum.sa.gov.au> or <forrestjan@adam.com.au>

Treasurer : 5 Oakleigh Road, MARION. 5043 S.AUST.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

The full exhibition and AO size panels from the Exhibition "Where have all the Butterflies gone?" are available from Jan Forrest at the South Australian Museum for use by Landcare and other Conservation groups at seminars, conferences and workshops or just for display. Included are five introductory panels, and seventeen panels from seven habitat areas: Coastal, Grasses, Mallee, Urban, Migration/Vagrant, Eucalyptus Forrest/Woodland, Arid, Wetland and Lower South East.

DIARY DATES

COMMITTEE MEETINGS - Meetings are normally held bi-monthly (usually the second Monday of the month) at 6.00pm usually at a committee members home. All members are welcome to attend. If you would like to attend please contact Secretary Jan Forrest for confirmation of date and venue.

Next Meeting: AGM 7th September, 7.30 Clarence Park Community Centre, East Avenue, Black Forest.

GENERAL MEETINGS - From Feb. 2011 we are planning to hold monthly general meetings with a guest speaker. Program, venue and dates to be advised.

WEB SITES

"Butterfly Gardening" - www.butterflygardening.net.au

'Butterfly Conservation SA Inc.' <http://www.chariot.net.au/~bcsa/index.htm>

'South Australian Butterflies' (Roger Grund private site)

- <http://www.chariot.net.au/~rgrund/index.htm>

'Butterfly Watch' and 'Butterfly Challenge' - SAMuseum website

www.samuseum.sa.gov.au then click on 'Whats On' then 'online exhibitions'.

Teacher Resources (Jackie Miers) - http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/jmresources/butadelaide/Butterflies_of_Adelaide.html

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

**Margot Bradley
Eugene Coscarelli
June Carey
Jen Day
Vanessa Germein
Kay Ellis
Peter Fuhlbohm
Alan Lagnado
Susan & Daryl Lloyd
Penny Marsh
Pam Sandys
John Wilson
Bianca Woolford
Karen Palmer
Jean Hancox
Malcolm Woolven
Lyndall Fowler
JC McCann
Rosemary Mackenzie
Jo Rebbeck
Pamela Saint
Angela Roodhouse
Alice Shore
Jane & Robert Childs**

