13, 2011

Monarch Alert has benefited from the involvement of friends such as Helen Johnson, a retired medical technician and citizen scientist who first urged Fly to start the program. Johnson’s financial support has been the sole source of funding for student research over the last decade. The monarchs, she said, give focus to her life in retirement. In turn, she is helping Cal Poly students partake in important research that could positively impact their future academic and professional endeavors.

A student team leader agrees: “I chose Cal Poly because it was important to me to do research that is applied, not just theoretical,” George said. And Griffiths said faculty encourage students to develop their own research projects and build skills outside of the classroom. “It’s amazing for students to be doing this kind of field work as undergrads,” she said. “There is no substitute for that kind of experience.”

To learn more about monarch butterflies and find out how you can help with the ongoing conservation efforts, go to monarchalert.calpoly.edu.

The ultimate goal of the program is to help shape conservation management techniques that will stem the population decline or even boost the number of monarchs. Their research is based on the monarch’s migratory habits. From early March to late October, monarchs are found at 17 sites in Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties. They don’t fly at temperatures below 55 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, they hang from trees, nestled in clumps that look more like dried brown leaves than vibrantly colored butterflies. The clumping helps the monarchs conserve energy and heat and helps keep branches from being buffeted by wind.

Insight into how the butterflies use the landscape may be critical in the management of monarch habitats. Butterflies arriving at a grove that has been diminished or destroyed may not be able to make the trip to another grove before nightfall. The consequences could be perilous.

An important lesson for students, Villablanca said, is that it’s not easy to study nature in nature. “People only conserve things they are aware of and care about,” Villablanca said, so students make public presentations and provide information and opportunities for people to be involved.

Monarch Alert has benefited from the involvement of friends such as Helen Johnson, a retired medical technician and citizen scientist who first urged Fly to start the program. Johnson’s financial support has been the sole source of funding for student research over the last decade. The monarchs, she said, give focus to her life in retirement. In turn, she is helping Cal Poly students partake in important research that could positively impact their future academic and professional endeavors.

A student team leader agrees: “I chose Cal Poly because it was important to me to do research that is applied, not just theoretical,” George said. And Griffiths said faculty encourage students to develop their own research projects and build skills outside of the classroom. “It’s amazing for students to be doing this kind of field work as undergrads,” she said. “There is no substitute for that kind of experience.”

To learn more about monarch butterflies and find out how you can help with the ongoing conservation efforts, go to monarchalert.calpoly.edu.

The ultimate goal of the program is to help shape conservation management techniques that will stem the population decline or even boost the number of monarchs. Their research is based on the monarch’s migratory habits. From early March to late October, monarchs are found at 17 sites in Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties. They don’t fly at temperatures below 55 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, they hang from trees, nestled in clumps that look more like dried brown leaves than vibrantly colored butterflies. The clumping helps the monarchs conserve energy and heat and helps keep branches from being buffeted by wind.

Insight into how the butterflies use the landscape may be critical in the management of monarch habitats. Butterflies arriving at a grove that has been diminished or destroyed may not be able to make the trip to another grove before nightfall. The consequences could be perilous.

An important lesson for students, Villablanca said, is that it’s not easy to study nature in nature. “People only conserve things they are aware of and care about,” Villablanca said, so students make public presentations and provide information and opportunities for people to be involved.

Monarch Alert has benefited from the involvement of friends such as Helen Johnson, a retired medical technician and citizen scientist who first urged Fly to start the program. Johnson’s financial support has been the sole source of funding for student research over the last decade. The monarchs, she said, give focus to her life in retirement. In turn, she is helping Cal Poly students partake in important research that could positively impact their future academic and professional endeavors.

A student team leader agrees: “I chose Cal Poly because it was important to me to do research that is applied, not just theoretical,” George said. And Griffiths said faculty encourage students to develop their own research projects and build skills outside of the classroom. “It’s amazing for students to be doing this kind of field work as undergrads,” she said. “There is no substitute for that kind of experience.”

To learn more about monarch butterflies and find out how you can help with the ongoing conservation efforts, go to monarchalert.calpoly.edu.