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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**December Monarch Butterfly Conference Attracts
National Researchers, Fans**

SAN LUIS OBISPO — More than 100 researchers and monarch butterfly aficionados from as far away as Minnesota will join Cal Poly faculty and students Thursday and Friday, Dec. 8-9, for a conference on "Conservation of the Monarch Butterfly — Population Dynamics and Migration."

Cal Poly biology Professor Dennis Frey and graduate student Shawna Stevens, co-leaders of Project Monarch Alert, will head up the conference. Project Monarch Alert studies fall migration, winter activity and spring dispersal of monarchs in western North America.

The event is sponsored by Cal Poly's College of Science and Mathematics Biological Sciences Department and financed in part by a generous donation from Helen I. Johnson of Salinas.

This is the first year Cal Poly has hosted the event. Speakers will include, among others, Sonia Altizer, University of Georgia Ecology Institute; Karen Oberhauser, University of Minnesota Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology; and Chip Taylor, Kansas University Entomology Department.

In addition to their academic roles, each speaker is dedicated to monarch butterfly conservation efforts. Altizer is an international authority on monarch ecology and evolution, as well as the effects of parasites on the insect. Oberhauser directs the Monarch Larval Monitoring Project that studies monarchs nationwide at their breeding grounds. Taylor is director of Monarch Watch, an educational outreach program that engages the public in large-scale research projects.

"Bringing the experts together with interested citizens will help advance our understanding of monarch migration," said Frey. "With the increasing threat of destruction to wintering and breeding grounds, it is vitally important to understand the population dynamics of monarchs in the West to aid in the conservation of this amazing insect."

Conference activities will also include presentations by many participants and a field trip to monarch winter sites in Pismo Beach. Cost is \$120 regular registration, \$80 for early registration by Nov. 18, and \$80 for seniors and students. Fee includes transportation during the two-day event. To register for the conference go to http://www.continuing-ed.calpoly.edu/conf_services.html. To learn more about the conference or Project Monarch Alert, go to <http://www.calpoly.edu/~bio/Monarchs/>, or contact Frey at dfrey@calpoly.edu or (805) 756-2802.

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