

[Skip to Content](#)

[Cal Poly](#)

[News](#)

Search Cal Poly News

Go

California Polytechnic State University

March 26, 2003

Contact: Sharon Kuhlenschmidt
(805) 756-5718

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Biologists Ask Public for Help With 'Monarch Alert' Project As Butterflies Carry Important Message

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Next time a monarch butterfly flutters nearby, take a closer look: It might be sporting a small tag with a toll-free 1-877 number and a special ID designed to help researchers better understand its migration.

The tagged butterflies are part of a research project called Project Monarch Alert, a collaboration among biologists from Cal Poly and the Ventana Wilderness Society designed to help solve the mystery of where monarchs go when they leave their wintering grounds.

During the butterfly's wintering phase, November through February, the researchers attached tags under the hindwing of more than 20,000 monarchs along the coast. The tags, weighing one-hundredth to one-fiftieth of the insect's body weight, carry a number that identifies the individual butterfly and a toll-free telephone number so anyone can contact Monarch Alert with details about a sighting.

Tags were attached in San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz and Marin counties -- the northern half of the monarch's California wintering range -- by Cal Poly Biological Sciences Professor Dennis Frey, graduate student Shawna Stevens, Ventana Wilderness Society biologists Sarah Hamilton and Jason Scott, and student volunteers.

The data gathered by the project will contribute to the conservation of what Frey calls "a truly amazing insect."

To help, anyone who sees a monarch butterfly with a small, white, round tag on it, should carefully capture the insect. Frey said a resting monarch can be picked up safely by the wings, and one can be captured in flight by throwing a soft cloth such as a T-shirt over it. Write down the five-digit tag number, note the location, and call

1-877-897-7740 toll free. Leave the address, cross street and town where the butterfly was found, along with your name and phone number. Then release the butterfly.

Researchers also want to know the specifics of tagged monarchs found dead.

Major support for Project Monarch Alert has been provided by Helen I. Johnson, a Salinas resident known, Frey said, as a "citizen scientist" whose commitment to improving the natural world "is reflected in the butterflies that are drawn to the native plants that populate her yard."

Other sponsors include the California State Parks and Recreation Department and the Central Coast Natural History Association.

More information about the project can be found at Frey and Stevens' Web site, <http://www.bio.calpoly.edu/BioSci/Monarchs/index.html>. They can be reached in the Cal Poly Biological Sciences Department at (805) 756-2802, at dfrey@calpoly.edu or srsteven@calpoly.edu, or by mail to the department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407.

Hamilton and Scott can be contacted at the VWS Big Sur Ornithology Lab, HC 67 Box 99, Monterey, CA 93940, (831) 624-1202, or sarahhamilton@ventanaws.org or jasonscott@ventanaws.org.

- 30 -

NOTE TO EDITORS: A drawing of a tagged monarch and a close-up of an ID tag are available in jpg format. Call Teresa Hendrix, Jo Ann Lloyd or Bob Anderson in Cal Poly Public Affairs at (805) 756-1511 or e-mail polynews@polymail.calpoly.edu.

[CP Home](#) • [CP Find It](#) [Get Adobe Reader](#) • [Microsoft Viewers](#)

[Events](#) • [Recent Releases](#) • [Cal Poly Magazine](#) •
[Cal Poly Update E-newsletter](#) • [Contact Public Affairs](#) • [Alumni](#) • [Giving](#) • [Athletics](#)

Cal Poly Public Affairs

California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
805.756.7266
polynews@calpoly.edu