

Meet Barbara and Edith



Barbara Bishop is a 40-year-old mum of five children; only the youngest two are at home now. With her husband, Kevin, she lives on a lifestyle block in mid Canterbury, breeding Monarch Butterflies.

Prior to that Barbara managed the former Palmerston Butterfly and Bird Haven, for 3½ years, where the focus was on breeding the Monarch, developing natural gardens inside the havens for the butterflies to feed and breed in, and the development of an educational programme for visiting schools and tourists alike.

Kevin and Barbara purchased their farm with a specific view to breed Monarch butterflies for rejuvenation of the populations in the wild.

“This past season was our first on the farm and we bred over 2000 butterflies in our garden, developed specifically to suit the nectaring needs of the Monarch,” she said. “We have a secondary focus on Red and Yellow Admiral.”

Barbara is currently working on a plan to promote butterflies as pollinators to the local agricultural industry.

“The Monarch is symbolic of the ever-changing path my life takes,” she said.

Her favourite quote is: ‘Just when the caterpillar thought his life was coming to an end, he changed into a butterfly’.

Barbara and Kevin welcome any interested enthusiasts to visit their farm and see what they are doing.

“Be prepared though!” she said. “You will be put to work. We have ten thousand swan plants to re-pot before spring!”

Edith, who lives in Russell, is not afraid of hard work either. Whatever Edith gets involved in, she immerses herself in it and helps it grow and succeed. In Northland she has been very involved in wearable art and MINDS (for people with disabilities, where she is a tutor). Other interests are ecology, humanity – and when she’s not at MINDS, she is working at either Mode Design or the Russell Bookshop.

“I’m very interested in helping with the Monarch Butterfly Trust,” said Edith. She was instrumental in creating the butterfly sanctuary right in Russell – and now her customers bring her cold Monarchs needing saving.

They know that Edith has a tender heart and will look after them.



Monarch Butterfly NZ Trust

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Report to Members

So much to tell you! What to tell you first?

As you know, we will be embarking on a major project this Spring. In May we learned that the **Mazda Foundation** has funded this to the tune of **\$8,000!**

The project will be in two parts:

- (a) Transects – People undertake weekly walks of a specific distance over the six warmer months, and log the number of butterflies they see. This will give an indication over the years if our butterfly population is increasing or decreasing. Butterflies are an important indicator as to the health of the environment.
- (b) Monarchs are tagged with durable tags. As butterflies are recovered, data will show how far they have travelled, length of life, and migratory patterns. This was first undertaken in NZ in the 1960s, when it was found most Monarchs stayed within 20km of where they were tagged!

In September we hope to hold meetings around NZ to explain what is entailed and to encourage people’s involvement. If you would like to be involved, please register on the website, www.monarch.org.nz – click on the mauve button.

We are awaiting the outcomes of other funding applications. And if you know of any likely funding sources, please let us know.

We now have two **new Trustees**, Barbara Bishop and Edith Sharpe – both Helen and Shelley are presently in the UK. As you will read elsewhere, Barbara is near Ashburton, so while it isn’t convenient for her signing pieces of paper, she does give our Trust a more national focus.

Membership subscriptions are now due. As you will see from the subscription form enclosed with this newsletter, there are some exciting incentives to send in your \$20, and to do it quickly – new members too! The end of the financial year is 30 June, and we will have our accounts audited then. To save postage costs these will be available, probably from the end of July, on our website.

We think you can be proud of what has been accomplished with your \$20 – remember, none of this would have been possible without your support. It is greatly appreciated – remember that, each time you see a butterfly.

Barbara, Edith, Gilly, Helen, Jacqui and Shelley – Trustees

Predation of Monarchs

There is no doubt about it – the worst problem our Monarchs face are WASPS.

We have two main wasps – paper wasps and the yellow and black common and German wasps. Wasps affect bee-keeping operations by competing for food with bees. Their sting also poses a potential health risk. Both types will strongly defend their nests if we get too close.

The German Wasp and Common Wasp (*Vespula germanica* and *V. vulgaris*) are very similar, both with yellow and black bodies – slightly bigger than a honeybee with smooth rather than hairy bodies. German wasps are a distinct grey colour. Nests are often underground, with one or more entrance holes, although they may be found in sheltered spots such as branches of trees or caves. Common wasps' nests are a yellowish to reddish brown.

Australian and Asian Paper Wasps (*Polistes humilis* and *P. chinensis* respectively) are smaller and slimmer than their cousins. The Australian paper wasp is brownish-black or yellowish, with light brownish yellow wings with a blue tint, whereas the Asian is yellow and black. Your regional council will probably be able to help you identify them with pictures on their website, or brochures.

If you have wasps in your garden, there is bound to be a nest somewhere nearby. In the early morning or late afternoon, when the sun's angle highlights them, watch for their 'flight path' – they will be going to and from the nest. Don't get too close! German and common wasps are usually found as close as 200 metres from their nests. Sprinkle them with flour or icing sugar so they're more visible; they generally fly in straight lines. Return at night and tip a tablespoon of dry Carbaryl powder insecticide into each entrance. Although our regional council don't recommend it, some people tip petrol or diesel into the nest's entrance, and then block the hole.

Paper wasp nests are umbrella-shaped and usually hanging from eaves or in trees/shrubs. You can kill them by spraying the nest with fly spray – be careful as dying wasps may drop down and sting you. Once there is no sign of any live wasps, enclose the nest in a plastic bag and cut it off with scissors.

An effective wasp trap can be made by cutting the top ¼ off a large plastic bottle. Glue or staple it on upside down, so the narrow opening faces down into the bottle – and then half-fill the container with a soft-drink or sugar and water, with a little detergent. Wasps will fly in to feed on the sweet solution and cannot fly out again. Another recommendation is to add a piece of smelly meat – they love the smell.

One of our pest exterminators here in Russell last summer dealt with a nest which was about 1.5 metres high, and almost a metre in thickness!

I was puzzled as to why wasps suddenly abandoned their diet of Monarch caterpillars towards the end of summer, and found out that the wasps actually change their

dietary requirements around this time – from protein to nectar.

“The growth phase of the nest cycle is over and the wasps do not need to gather much protein to feed growing wasp larvae,” I was told by a wasp expert. “Much of the wasp activity you see in the autumn relates to mating rituals and tends to involve dancing males.”

He said that *Vespula* wasp nests are also in a declining phase at that time of year, but will carry on a little longer than *Polistes*. He also advised that there was not much point in trying to control wasps in the autumn or spring.

“In early Spring, many of the small founding wasp nests will fail for natural reasons, and they're more difficult to find when small. Forget about wasp control until early summer,” he told me. “Then begin searches for paper wasp nests and control them with a good dose of fly spray at dusk or dawn to kill the adults. Snip off the nest and burn/freeze/squash to prevent new emergent wasps taking it over.”

We hope that next season people will be able to buy wasp bait for the control of *Vespula* wasps (not *Polistes*). This can be put out in raised bait stations from January to March and the wasps take it back to their nest (thereby alleviating the need to actually find the wasp nest).

Paper wasps are habitual foragers that will keep returning to forage on plants that have been profitable for them in the past (which makes sense, because the herbivores they prey on tend to have clustered distributions in the environment). This is why paper wasps, like other predators, are so effective at removing all the eggs/caterpillars on any given shrub once they've started working it.

Having your milkweed in pots means you can shift the plant to other locations in the garden on a regular basis to alleviate this habitual foraging effect. Another way is to monitor your plants until they have evidence of monarch eggs/new larvae, and then cover the plants in an insect screen cage to prevent the wasps getting at them.

Jacqui

Lots more exciting information about pests and Monarchs on our website – check out the forum.

Interested in going on tour to Mexico next year to see the overwintering Monarchs? Contact Jacqui if interested – itineraries out soon.

We have been invited to have a display at the Ellerslie Flower Show!!! We will be the only ones with moth-eaten (butterfly-eaten) leaves! If you wish to help, please contact Jacqui.

The Butterfly Bay report is nearing completion. It will appear on our website as soon as it is available.

If you've printed this out and read it... why not pass this to a friend, put it on the community noticeboard, give it to a school...