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Butterflies Go To Florida Too

The curiosity of a boy with a butterfly net 30 years ago, plus that boy's persistence, has led to an important scientific advance.

It might be described as one of the longest and zaniest research jobs on record.

Dr. Frederick A. Urquhart, head of the Royal Ontario Museum's Division of Zoology and Palaeontology, announced recently that his research to find out where the butterflies go in the winter is complete. It is the first proof of an insect migration ever presented, and the techniques developed will enable scientists to study movements of some insects which are vitally important in agriculture.

As a boy, Fred Urquhart was curious about Canada's best known butterfly, the King Billy, or Monarch. No one knew where they went in winter. Some said they made a suicide flight to the ocean; others said they migrated to South America.

After years of study, and research since 1938 with the assistance of hundreds of cooperators, all over North America, Dr. Urquhart found his answer. The Monarchs go to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico for the winter, and they come back to Canada in the spring, weary, tattered, but sun-tan brown.

The problem that made the years of work necessary, was that the scientist had to know exactly where individual butterflies went, to prove any theory. How do you follow a butterfly?

After several years of experimenting with different glues and papers, Dr. Urquhart found a way to stick a label on a butterfly's wing that wouldn't wash off, and that wouldn't interfere with flight.

From 1938 to 1940, he worked with other scientists across the country, trying different kinds of tags and labels. His work was interrupted by war service. In 1950, he was back at it again, and a satisfactory technique was developed in time for the 1954 tagging.

In all, 40,000 Monarch butterflies have been tagged, and Fred Urquhart captured and labelled 20,000 himself. He has had over 300 cooperators in Canada and the U.S.A. tagging and spotting. Until this year, results were discouraging. Butterflies bearing the label, "Return to Museum Toronto" were found in but a few scattered locations. None of those tagged on the Gulf or in Florida were captured here, and no Canadian tags were found in Florida.

The strange weather of 1956 seemed to help in some unexplained way, and the results already this fall have made the proof of migration complete.

A Monarch tagged on September 3 at Meaford, Ontario, was found in Galveston, Texas, on October 18. And Dr. Urquhart has had his personal reward, for the other two important specimens, found in Brownwood, Texas and Silsbee, Texas, were both tagged by him near his Highland Creek home.

A scientific report on the project is being prepared now for release next year.

The study of the Monarch butterfly was not limited to its migration. Dr. Urquhart also wanted to know what killed them. They have no natural enemies, and if all of the Monarch caterpillars survived, the earth would soon be knee-deep in them.

In finding the answer to this

NEWSPAPERS ARE NERVE CENTRES

Business men must learn to trust, respect and co-operate with the press as an initial step in developing good community relations, Ira G. Needles, president of B. F. Goodrich Canada Ltd. told the annual meeting of the Stratford Chamber of Commerce recently.

He said that newspapers, radio and TV are the nerve centres of community thought and are entitled to the support of business and community leaders. "The press is determined to present both sides of any situation with complete objectivity in the news columns, but far too often spokesmen retreat behind that deplorable reply of 'no comment.'" It seems that many are reluctant to recognize that the reporter is seeking the truth, wants to tell the story to the public and must depend upon us to help him."

question, the scientist convinced his neighbours that he was insane. Caterpillars live on milkweed plants, so Dr. Urquhart simply ploughed up his three-acre suburban garden, and planted milkweed. He spent several summers sitting on the ground in his milkweed patch, watching caterpillars. "Why don't they survive? It turns out that the caterpillar is a natural Mr. McGoo. It just can't seem to find its way around. When a slight breeze shakes the plant, most of the caterpillars fall off the leaves, can't find their way back again, and starve to death. Dr. Urquhart hasn't decided what to do with his three-acres of prime milkweed, now that the project is over.

"People often think of the scientist as a man in a white coat, doing complicated and mysterious experiments which no layman could possibly understand," Dr. Urquhart said. "In reality, a lot of important research is just a matter of doing the obvious, simple thing, like labelling butterflies to keep track of their travels, or watching caterpillars to see what happens to them. It's common sense backed up by a thorough understanding of the subject."

Mr. Needles urged businessmen to give every possible aid to reporters and to take the press into confidence. He cautioned against confusing advertising with news. "The sales story belongs in the advertising column but any news story is treated on the basis of its news value."

The importance of newspaper deadlines and the speed which is necessary in replying to a reporter's question were other rules of press relations outlined by the speaker.

The strong personal desire to serve was lauded by Mr. Needles as the vital element in service to

the community. He said that participation in chamber of commerce work and other service functions in a community depended upon a high sense of personal responsibility and faith.

Encouraging people to offer their services for political office and to become active in community service projects were important factors in community success. "I believe we would reap a rich harvest if we further recognized the dignity of our employees by placing their promotions before the community and I believe we should demonstrate our interest in the community by advising it of

events in our office, factory or store," said Mr. Needles.

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