Trees for Monarchs

by Sue Sill

Monarchs

lost an important advocate when Bob Small died on November 17, 2004, but his spirit and legacy live on. In March 2005, amidst clouds of Monarchs at one of the butterflies' favorite over-wintering sites, Jose Luis Alvarez, the partner with whom Bob shared a deep passion for restoring Michoacán forests to preserve Monarch winter habitat, and Bob's son, Dr. Robert Small, a wildlife biologist who works in Alaska, spread Bob's ashes in the forest he spent nearly the last decade of his life working to restore. Also attending were Dr. Lincoln P. Brower, who worked with Bob since the inception of the Michoacán Reforestation Fund (MRF), Maraleen Manos Jones, an author, artist and butterfly enthusiast who has been involved with Monarchs for three decades, and Bob's email friend and dedicated popular Monarch author, Elizabeth Hunter from North Carolina.

It all started back in 1997, while many were lamenting the loss of forest in and around the Monarch's winter habitat in central Mexico, two determined men decided to do something about it. It was on the bustling sidewalk in front of the Gran Hotel, overlooking the Plaza Chica in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán — a spot where locals and tourists alike traditionally stop for coffee and to chat — that Bob Small, by fortuitous coincidence, met Jose Luis Alvarez. Bob, an American, was visiting the charming colonial town as a retired tourist. Jose Luis was a Mexican tree nurseryman who grew seedlings for the Mexican Government's reforestation projects. After living eight years in France, Jose Luis had come home to the Mexico he loved, and was disturbed by the environmental degradation he found there. What these two men cooked up in that impassioned exchange grew to be a partnership between *The Cruz Habitat Protection Project*

Millions of Monarchs spend the winter in the mountains of central Mexico.
Opposite page: With so many Monarchs in flight, one can hear the sound of their wings beating the air.
Above: The trunks of the oyamel trees glow orange in the sun.