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Nature

The Amazing Monarch: The Secret Wintering Grounds of an Endangered Butterfly
Windle Turley
Turley Gallery
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Dozens of breathtaking photographs reveal a beauty long unseen, and one that few people see in person.

For centuries their winter whereabouts remained an elusive mystery. Migrating monarch butterflies would hide away in some unknown southern location only to reappear months later as they flew back north. Several generations later, their grandchildren would find their way south once more, sometimes to the exact same tree their ancestors left. The alluring puzzle of how they accomplish this feat is surpassed only by the captivating beauty of the swarms of golden creatures as they travel. And by the stunning beauty of what was revealed when their wintering ground was finally discovered.

Photographer and writer Windle Turley turns his lens on these creatures in *The Amazing Monarch* to capture their beauty and explore their winter hideaway. Dozens of breathtaking photographs reveal a beauty long unseen, and one that few people see in person. Poems and quotes interspersed throughout the book draw the heart as strongly as the photographs call to the soul. Then, insightful text in the back stimulates curious minds with science and storytelling. And it highlights the environmental and ecological threats to the monarch's very existence, a point all the more poignant after the gorgeous pictures.

The photographs include close-ups of the butterflies, whether simply of their wings or of a single one perched on a flower. More panoramic shots reveal literally thousands of butterflies coating everything in sight with their orange hues. Every square inch of trees, bushes, and ground in the wintering grounds is covered, giving the area a mystical quality. These photos are expertly shot and beautifully reprinted with vivid colors and sharp details. Readers may be surprised that they can't help turning the pages, as the sights seem almost surreal. And the design of the book (and cover, too) sets it all off at its best.

Poetry and quotes from everyone from Carl Sagan to Hans Christian Andersen and Emily Dickinson are scattered throughout. Folk legends and comments from butterfly experts are also included. They provide comfortable breaks from the photographs and are set with faded script lettering behind. Again, this gives the book a high-quality feel.

The back of the book features a discussion of the butterfly's life cycle and migration patterns. While this portion leans a bit more toward the scientifically minded or, perhaps, butterfly enthusiasts, those who would normally be drawn only to the pictures may find it a surprisingly interesting read. This section is well researched, as demonstrated by the copious notes. And after the reader comes to appreciate the monarch in a fresh way through the pictures, the concerns expressed about environmental threats to the creature become even more powerful.

It's a stunning book, appropriate for any coffee table. Everyone from adults to young children will be enthralled by the photographs and charmed by the quotes. And those who view things more intellectually, will appreciate the carefully researched discussion of the mysterious migration pattern only recently revealed.

Diane Gardner