

California's monarch butterfly path to extinction: round-up

In 2015, I bicycled down the West Coast of California as a part of one of the world's epic cycling journeys from Canada to Mexico.

Every curve on Route 101 featured endless rock islands anywhere from 50 to 200 yards out into the Pacific Ocean. Some big, some small! The road carved over the terrain like a giant Anaconda with no end in sight. Each time the highway neared the ocean; I enjoyed those multifaceted islands featuring an array of seabirds perched on them whose waste turned the rocks white. Some birds flew in groups barely skimming the ocean. Others stood on the beaches alone or in bunches. Whales flapped their tails beyond the raging surf. Always, a sense of life thriving with life! Endless waves crashed over the rocks creating spectacular liquid fury. Chameleon skies painted a changing landscape against the Pacific's blue waters. With all the dramatic scenes before me, the journey remained enthralling, fascinating, gripping and visually spellbinding.

But when I arrived at Pismo Beach, California—a place I cycled through in 1995 to see countless trees dragging their branches onto the ground from billions of Monarch butterflies hanging on for their hibernation—I witnessed 1/10th the number of butterflies hanging from the trees.

According to Science: State of the Universe, January 29, 2015, Monsanto's Roundup weed killer destroyed so much of the butterfly's food base—milkweed—that it caused an avalanche of decline. Monarchs declined by 90 percent in the past 20 years.

Ironically, while I spent the night in a yard across from a little league baseball park in Crescent City, California. In

the morning, I watched a man spray Roundup for an hour all over the park. Every 'weed' suffered a huge dose of spray. When I confronted him about it by asking him, "What weed killer are you using?"

He responded, "Roundup."

I said, "Are you aware that 90 percent of Monarch butterflies have died off because of Roundup?"

He got angry, "What do you want me to do, burn the weeds off this field with gasoline?"

I replied, "Why not have your teams come a little early and pick all the weeds by hand. It's their park and their lives. Show them how to be ecologically responsible."

"Well," he grumbled. "I'll see what I can do."

Not until I reached Pismo Beach did I realize the horror Roundup created. Which brings me to this question: how will any creatures of the insect world survive with California's chemical onslaught by 38 million residents who spray their lawns, parks and gardens with Roundup? What happens when California adds somewhere between 10 and 20 million more people—all of the spraying Monsanto's Roundup?

At some point, we must ask our selves if we value the Natural World enough to take a stand by outlawing the use of chemicals.

Additionally, we must make good choices to force farmers to stop poisoning the planet with chemicals. You may accomplish that goal by using your buying dollars. You may choose organically grown foods. You can avoid genetically modified foods by demanding labeling. www.JustLabelIt.org

In 2015, in Boulder, Colorado, the city council outlawed the sale and use of Roundup and other herbicides in the confines of the city limits. The State of Vermont voted to label all

GMOs.

You may accomplish the same victories by your actions at the community level. You choose with your dollars and your votes. The worst decision you can make: to think that you can do so little that you do nothing at all.

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