

Carlos The 3rd

The Wandering Monarch




1

Darkwood Woodcarving
By: Gary A Crosby M.M.M., C.D.



The Beginning



Our story begins with a solitary monarch butterfly, a remarkable creature adorned in vibrant hues. This butterfly embarks on an extraordinary journey northward to New Brunswick, a haven where Milkweed thrives amid stunning natural beauty. This countryside features picturesque shorelines, shimmering lakes, cascading waterfalls, and charming covered bridges, enhancing its incredible, enchanting allure. But best of all for the Monarchs, it's the land of the wild Milkweed.

To fully appreciate this story, we must first travel to 200 km south of Saint John, New Brunswick, Carlos the third's birthplace. He hails from a distinguished lineage of monarchs, with his ancestor, Carlos the First, initiating the annual migration northward after spending the winter in the picturesque mountains of Mexico. Specifically, in the Mirador region, known as "El Oyamel," where beautiful mountainous area offer warm and comfortable winters. It is a magical place, but like all things, it must come to an end. As the seasons shift, Carlos the First started to feel the pull to embark on this lengthy journey to the eastern coasts of New Brunswick, Canada, a land renowned for its wild Milkweed and rich, tasty nectar.

Unfortunately, Carlos the First could only complete one-third of the journey due to his brief lifespan of 2 to 6 weeks. Carlos the Second one of his sons would take up the mantle and push further north and along the way have his own Family and offspring's and the Monarch adventure would continue. At a point 200 km south of New Brunswick, Carlos the Third took up the mantle of the quest Northward, setting his sights on Saint John, New Brunswick, and the adventure continues. It would take three generations to make it to New Brunswick. This cycle of life happens every year, but it is becoming more difficult as the environment changes.

Carlos the Third was a magnificent butterfly with his bright, glowing orange and black wings. A distinctive black dot on his massive wings stated to all that he was a male butterfly. He was a little larger than most male Monarchs; his body was long and partially covered in thin black hair and bright white dots. His antennae reached out well in front of his body. His thorax was magnificent; powerful as Monarchs go; he was the top of his species,



strong and full of colour. His eyes had a complex lens structure. He had taste and smell second to none, which he needed to survive the wilds of the Northern country where only the strong survive. All in all, Carlos saw himself as an incredibly bright, young and strong butterfly, truly a Monarch among all butterfly species.

It is said that Monarchs can travel up to 9 km/h in a somewhat straight line, if you call it that. It was more like someone who forgot which way they were going every few meters, then headed off in a different direction, continuing this pattern until they reached their destination. It all made sense to Carlos; it was just the natural flow of everything, with a little chaos mixed in... for a master flyer like the Monarchs, this was normal. In one day, a monarch can travel up to 160 km with a little help from tail winds. They can also reach altitudes up to 2 km in the right conditions, and man, what a view from up there! You can see Milkweed from kilometers away!

From this point forward in the story, we will refer to Carlos the Third simply as Carlos, in honour of his grandfather, Carlos the First, who originally set out on this grand adventure from the warm mountains of Mexico, where he spent his winter and would be known as the Super Generation. After all, Carlos the First made the trip south and lived for 9 months, which in terms of a normal monarch's life is an incredible length of time.

Fast forward to late May and present day as Carlos arrived at Saint John, New Brunswick feeling quite hungry. Fortunately, he found himself perched on a tall blade of green wild grass, gazing at a breathtaking view just north of the Irving Nature Park on what looked like a large hill filled with colourful Maritime houses. He could see before him a vibrant tapestry of flowers blooming in what humans called their Pollinator Gardens. Carlos considered creating gardens was one of the main strengths of these strange creatures, for he never witnessed them doing anything else. They would scurry around walking along with other large furry animals and picking up their messes; some of which were larger than most monarchs. But he never witnessed them doing anything else.

The garden in front of him was a stunning feast for the eyes, promising to nourish him for a lifetime if need be; it was an incredible view. Humans were good for one thing, he thought, and that was creating fantastic natural gardens when they wanted to. This garden was just what he was looking for.

He launched himself from the tall blade of grass he was sitting on and unfurled his wings, and using his keen ability to fly, he gained altitude as he made his way to the garden that lay before him. Carlos had rested enough; he decided it was the perfect moment to indulge himself in some good old Canadian nectar from this vibrant polli-

nator garden. With a burst of energy, he launched himself higher into the crisp morning air, his magnificent black and orange wings catching the sunlight. As he rhythmically flapped his wings, he effortlessly gained altitude, soaring across the open field toward the garden in seconds. He could see other pollinators swarming the flowers. This did not concern him; there was plenty to be had, after all, it was the land of plenty. It was just those pushy Bumblebees that bothered him from time to time.

Upon arriving, he gracefully landed on a bright orange flower, its petals brimming with sweet, golden pollen. As he descended into the rich, fragrant pool of nectar at the flower's base, he felt a wave of satisfaction wash over him—this was precisely what he needed to rejuvenate his spirit; the trip north was worth it.

Now, all he needed to do was locate some Milkweed plants, such as the common or swamp Milkweed, which is essential for the survival of his future offspring. If he was going to do his part for his species, he needed to locate some of that sweet Milkweed, but first, he needed to gain more energy. He would spend a little more time feeding in the lush garden provided by nature's hand.

Thanks to the people of Saint John, there was no shortage of gardens, and the blooms this year were exceptional. He would have to make his way back here every few days to enjoy its succulent embrace of nectar.

After satisfying his hunger and a little rest, he would embark on his quest for Milkweed. He was thinking perhaps he should push a little south first before heading North again towards the shores of the Fundy Bay.

But first, now that he was just about full and well rested, he would head up, gain a little altitude, and check out the New Brunswick shoreline. Just then, a massive black with a yellow striped bumblebee landed next to him. Carlos immediately jumped backwards, flapping his bright orange wings, gaining altitude and displaying his warning colours. He thought to himself that Bumbles were always pushy, being massive, bulky creatures and not very attractive with their one thin yellow stripe; they didn't even have any orange colour. They would always seem to push out the other pollinators. They were not the bullies of the garden but rather just the clumsy Bumble.

As Carlos moved backwards and up, he saw something out of the corner of his eye that caught his attention. It was a flash of bright yellow and black. It was smaller than Carlos, but it sent him into a panic. He immediately dived straight down and cut hard to the right, speeding past the Bumblebee he just left behind on his flower. He was now flying extremely fast, diving and weaving in and out of the pollinator garden. As he cut back to the right, he was able to see what was chasing him... it was a Yellow-jacket wasp, a killer of Monarchs. A hunter-killer stalking his prey, and he was the prey. Carlos was now fighting one of the most serious battles of his young life,

and he was not sure he would survive this one. He darted around several more flower stems before glancing back to see if he was still being hunted. The wasp was still there, catching up; he needed to lose it in the pollinator garden. He dived deeper into the dense foliage of the garden, twisting and darting from left to right. The wasp was still there, but Carlos had an idea. He remembered seeing a Downy woodpecker flying around the garden earlier and decided to see if he could get the Downy to help with his hunting problem. He darted around some more, dragging the wasp along with him until he flew past a large tulip stem. He shot straight up 20m into the air, well above the garden and stalled out, making sure his wings were spread wide apart to attract the attention of the Downy. He then dived back down, speeding past the wasp just missing him and back into the garden foliage. Just before he hit the flower canopy, he turned to see just how far behind him the wasp was, which was just turning around as he came to a stop in midair. But coming to a full stop the wasp had made himself a perfect target for a Downy Woodpecker. Just then, a larger flash of black and white streaked by so fast between him and the wasp that he almost lost control as he was forced to completely spin around; just in time to see the Downy Woodpecker chomping down on the yellow jacket that had just been hunting him. Wow, that was close. Yellow jackets have been known to kill Monarchs, and with the sun up and the warm air, they were very active in the garden. But thanks to the Downy woodpecker, the threat was gone for now.



Carlos needed to get higher to avoid the wasps currently hunting close to the ground. He would just have to watch out for the young Blue Jays now. It was known that young Blue Jays, from time to time, like to eat Monarchs but then vomit them up due to the toxins in the Monarchs. An adult Blue Jay normally leaves the unsuspecting Monarch alone because it has learned this vital lesson over the years, but the young ones are still just learning. As for the Yellow Jacket Wasp, well, life is cruel at times, and Carlos knew that if he exposed himself by flying up and into the open, displaying his colours, something like a woodpecker would see the wasp and find it difficult to turn down such a tasty snack.

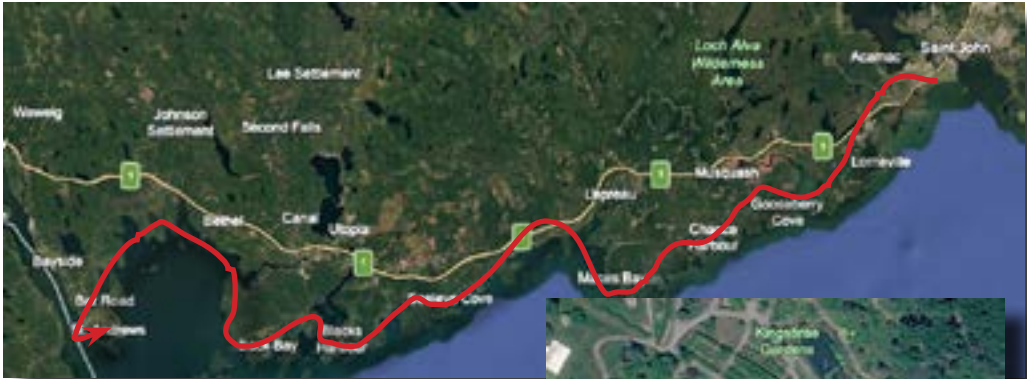
As Carlos regained the altitude that he had lost during the wasp attack, he could see that the early morning had turned into late morning as the sun crested high above the New Brunswick sky. He could now see all the human creatures scurrying around, as if they had somewhere to be in such a great hurry; strange creatures, these humans.

Carlos decided to turn west and make his way along the shoreline towards the southern part of NB, thinking perhaps with the warmer air, there would be milkweed growing. However, in the back of his mind,

something took over and urged him to make his way to Kingsbrae Gardens for a couple of weeks.

But before leaving, he looked back at the wonderful city of Saint John, NB, with its diverse culture, full of respectful people living and working together as they create incredible gardens along the shoreline.

He knew not why, but he needed to fly towards St Andrews, New Brunswick, it was calling to him.



Carlos next stop Kingsbrae Garden
15-28 June 2026