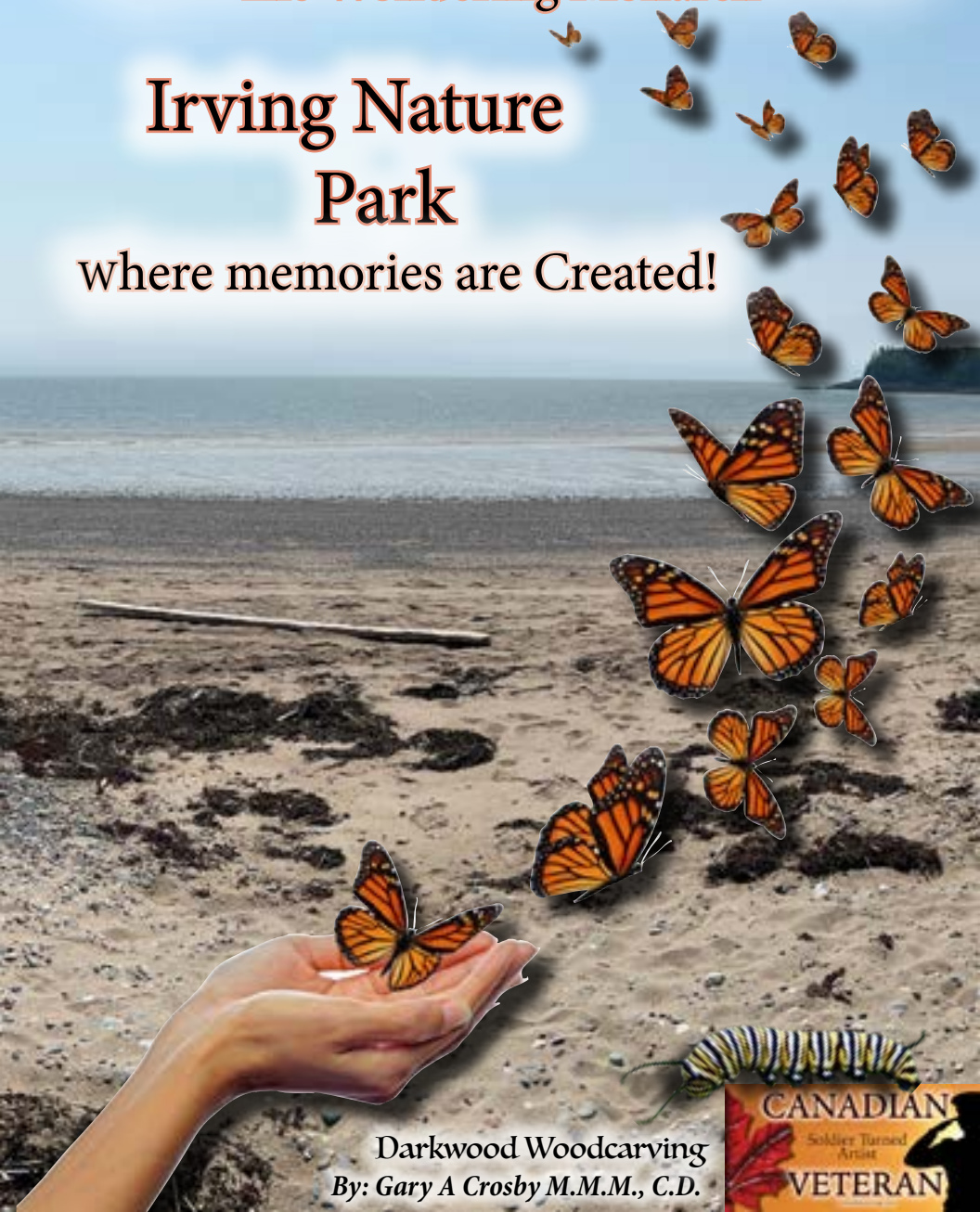


Carlos The 3rd

The Wondering Monarch

Irving Nature Park

where memories are Created!



Darkwood Woodcarving

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Carlos the 4th would once again assume his father's and grandfather's name. Carlos is now just a young, inexperienced monarch, full of curiosity and a sense of adventure. He wanted to see it all, to participate in this thing called life. He felt the urge to head back to the Irving Nature Park before making his way along the New Brunswick shoreline.

Carlos did not know it, but it was his sense of duty to support the monarch species that drove him back south to the Irving Nature Park. But, all he knew was that it was time to push his wings to the max and gain as much altitude as possible before turning southward towards Saint John and the Monarch way-station, where he first started his life. He would say farewell to his brothers and sisters, as he may never see them again. The lifespan of a monarch is only 5 to 6 weeks, if it is lucky, and New Brunswick is such a big province for monarch butterflies to fly around.



He could feel the summer winds fill his wings and push him southward as he once again would be riding the wind like his father before him.



The trip south was uneventful, aside from avoiding all the eagles and other birds of prey. Carlos would make it back to the way-station just as night fell. He searched the local trees until he found the monarch roosting in the park, where he would spend the night. Tomorrow would be a bright new day, and he was looking forward to visiting the entire park.

Night fell over the park as a cascading cool wind came across the Bay of Fundy. Carlos was now on a branch halfway up an ancient pine tree that had seen hundreds of years of life. Can you imagine what it has seen, the history it would have witnessed.



As the cool air moved in, Carlos could sense it was going to be a cool night, but he was safe among friends with the protection of the old Pine.

The sun cracked the eastern sky, and a bright beam of light ripped across the bay, lighting up the old pine tree and warming its occupants. Soon, Carlos would start his tour of the Irving Nature Park and check out all its wonders, from the wandering deer to the birdlife, avoiding them when possible. He did not want to be dinner for any hungry bird.



Carlos dove off the pine branch, gaining speed before starting to use his strong wings to push himself towards the park, gliding between strokes as he soared over the barn and picnic area of the Sheldon Point Trailhead. The Waystation is located along the trail behind the barn and down the Sheldon Point Trail. After all, the park had so much to offer with its incredible views and meandering walking trails, not to mention all the wildlife.

As Carlos considered his options; with a quick glance, he could see the humans starting to gather along the beach near the entrance of the nature park. Probably going to walk the beach and splash in the cool Atlantic Ocean. Carlos, now looking deeper into the park, could see the Marsh Boardwalk jutting out into the tidal mud flats and grassy tidal fields, which looked like Marram grass. Carlos decided to take a trip along the outer shoreline and follow the park all the way around, ending up at the beach area.

Carlos dropped down to ground level, skirting the shoreline looking for some golden-

rods or other local flowers that could supply him with a little nectar before he continued on. He would find just what he was looking for just past the squirrel trail entrance. Goldenrods and lots of them along the shoreline just back in the trees away from the water. He just needed to keep his wits about him, as that forest is full of birds and other predators. As he came in for a landing, he could see some Canadian Tiger Swallowtails over by a small patch of lupines; you could say they were getting loopy on the lupines.

Carlos was not sure what effect the lupines had on the Tiger Swallowtails, but they acted rather strangely after feeding on lupines. Erratic behaviour like flying in continuous circles, running into trees and each other, just weird behaviour for a Tiger Swallowtail.

Carlos spent about 20 minutes enjoying some much-deserved nectar from the field of Goldenrods before considering moving on. He would be joined by several bees and a strange-looking butterfly, much smaller than he was, but it looked very similar to the



monarch, with a slightly different colour scheme. The butterfly was the Painted Lady, and she was not alone; there were several

Painted Ladies now. They were not pushy like the big bumbles; they were quite indifferent and were only interested in the nectar.

Once Carlos had his fill, it was time to move on as more bees started to move in for the pollen. With a mighty flapping of his wings, Carlos took to the sky, keeping 20m off the ground to avoid predators but just enough altitude to have the best view possible of his surroundings. The next stop was the famous Deer Trail, which wanders lazily through the park. There are several trails running through the park, such as the Heron Trail, Seal Trail, Chickadee Trail, Squirrel Trail, and Sheldon Point Trail, but no Monarch Trail, not a single trail named after the monarch. Yes, there is the Monarch Waystation, which was his birth-place and home where his great adventure

started from, but no Monarch Trail! Perhaps the owners and managers of the park may consider giving the species their own trail. It could be over by the waystation; just saying.

Carlos was now coming to “The Gorge” Rocks, an incredible rocky outcrop on the very tip of the park. He could see from his elevated vantage point that there were several seals resting on the rocks, sunning themselves and avoiding predators as the tide went out.

As Carlos made his way up the eastern shore of the park, he could see Seal Rocks in the distance, and from this distance, he could see several Double-Crested Cormorants fishing in the waters around Seal Rocks.

Carlos loved making this trip around the park; it reminds him of the tranquillity and stubbornness of nature. Life, after all, is a challenge, and no matter how long or short it is, like the monarch, every day is a challenge with incredible rewards such as this trip around the park and the fantastic views. And speaking of rewards, he



was now flying over Seal Rocks, and he noticed a couple of young deer walking along the shoreline, eating the salt grass of the park and just above them was a young eagle still without its signature white feathers, sitting on top of a single lone tree that was jutting out over the water. The eagle, even at its young age, still bent the tree slightly over due to its current size.

Carlos was now gliding past the human Observation Deck, where those strange creatures that can't fly like to congregate and watch nature unfold in front of them. This was one of the most visited parts of the park, other than the beaches and the kids' park. There are several smaller beaches along the park's shoreline, but Carlos had two beaches he loved to visit. First on the list was the beach that looked towards Seal Rocks, and the second beach was the massive beach at the mouth of the park, which humans called Saints Rest Beach, with its wildflowers, never-ending sea grasses, and continuous sandy water's edge.

Just as Carlos was taking in the sights, his world turned upside down. Something very large just flew past him, diving into the ocean waters below. It was so massive that the wind turbulence spun Carlos into an uncontrollable dive, causing him to roll as he fell. Was this the end of his story? To be taken down by a passerby, by a feathered friend? He continued his dive, seeing glimpses of sky and water with each rotation. Carlos started to force his wings outward, trying to stabilize his fall before he reached the water surface. If he did not,... this would definitely be the end of his story. For once in the ocean waters, he would not be able to recover. But he had so much more to do; he needed to get back to the waystation and help grow his species, and he wanted to visit his family in Hopewell Rocks and Parlee Beach . There was so much more that needed to be done. The water was coming up fast, and Carlos had one last chance to survive another day. He forced his wings out, stabilizing his fall and controlling his spin. Just as his wings filled with air, he lifted his head and skimmed across the ocean surface with his back wings, leaving a slight wake on the



salt water. He flapped his wings harder than he had ever before, gaining altitude fast, knowing there were unknown predators beneath the surface. Once he was back to cruising altitude, he looked around for whatever had just sent him into a spin. He could see it was a young eagle that was fishing for its morning meal.



Carlos did not blame the eagle, as he probably did not even see him as he dove for his morning meal. Carlos was just happy he was not the fish that the eagle had just caught, which looked like a very large fish. This event made Carlos consider that to the larger creatures he was nothing more than a grain of dust. This was an important lesson to learn. He would keep watch in all directions when in the hunting grounds of other predators.



Carlos was now back to making his way down the coastline, back towards the abandoned fishing weir. He would have to keep an eye out for eagles and other predators, as this is prime hunting ground. That said, it is

an incredible natural New Brunswick coastline. As Carlos made his way past the weir, he could see seals fishing just below the surface. The sun was just at the right level where he could see deep into the clear Atlantic Ocean waters. He could see them doing their underwater dance, twisting and spinning in all possible directions. He was wondering how they



could have such precise movements without wings. And their underwater dance was smooth, not jerky like a butterfly. What kind of wings would allow you to move like that underwater? Never being able to go to their realm,

he was destined to simply wonder and marvel at the elegance of the seals' dance.

Carlos could now see the large Observation tower in the distance, and just past that was the Saints Rest Beach where the humans congregated and walked the large beach playing in the surf, never being able to fly above them like a butterfly or live below the waters like the seals...Strange creatures these

humans, but all in all happy creatures, and they love to create flower gardens, creating the nectar Monarchs are always searching for.

As Carlos passed the last of the beach area, he could see the kids' parks up the hill to his left with their Cedar Hedge Mazes and Children's Forest play area. More important to Carlos were the abundant wildflowers that grew in the area. But he felt the need to go back home to the Monarch Waystation, where he would spend the next few days visiting family and friends. After that, it was off to Hopewell Rocks for a couple of weeks.

If you're looking to visit this incredible Nature Park in Saint John, check out the link below.

<https://saintjohn.ca/en/parks-and-recreation/parks-and-trails/irving-nature-park>

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