

The Insectarium: A deeply committed museum

The Insectarium aims to ...

- ... introduce the public to the world of insects.
- ... make people more aware of insects' diversity, biology and ecological roles, through its dynamic museological approach and school programs.
- ... foster a positive attitude toward insects.

Acting to protect life

These objectives are meaningless unless they can be translated into actions to protect nature. Over the past 20 years, the Insectarium has initiated a wide range of projects to promote species protection. The **monarch butterfly is the emblem of the Montréal Insectarium**. Two activities turn the spotlight on these fascinating migratory insects and help protect them:

- The Monarch Odyssey – an event held every fall since 1994. The Insectarium raises monarch butterflies in captivity and invites visitors to watch as they are released to head off on their long journey to their wintering grounds in Mexico. The event contributes to the study of monarchs' migratory behaviour and provides valuable information for researchers in the Monarch Watch program, at the University of Kansas. The scientific benefits are considerable, since Quebec is at the northern edge of these butterflies' range.
- To complement this activity, the **Monarchs Without Borders** program offers schools monarch-raising kits that come with a complete teacher's guide. The program is co-ordinated by the Friends of the Insectarium and also affiliated with **Monarch Watch**.

Butterflies Go Free, produced in co-operation with the Montréal Botanical Garden, is a real hit with the public. Its goal is to make people aware of butterflies' and moths' roles and diversity and the importance of conservation, focusing on a new theme each year. Species from all over the world are brought together in the Main Exhibition Greenhouse, giving delighted visitors a chance to get a close-up look at these winged beauties flitting around.

Sharing knowledge

- Every year, the Insectarium receives about 1,000 **requests for entomological information from the public**. To answer all these questions, it created a free entomological reference Website, the **Toile des insects du Québec**, in co-operation with its partners in the entomological community.
- The Insectarium is committed to protecting our global entomological heritage, by conserving and showcasing its **live and mounted collections**.
- The Insectarium has two kinds of mounted collections: its scientific collection (150,000 specimens) and its display collection (20,000 specimens).
- With its 40,000 specimens, the Insectarium's computerized scientific collection is a very useful reference for making entomological identifications, and is part of the national natural science database of the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN).
- The live collection comprises some one hundred species of arthropods bred in captivity, of which 70% are insects, 30% are arachnids and myriapods.

It is impossible to talk about the Insectarium without mentioning its founder, Georges Brossard, a passionate entomologist who painstakingly assembled an impressive collection of mounted insects. His collection was first put on public display as part of an exhibition in the Montréal Botanical Garden greenhouses in 1986, and donated to the city of Montréal in 1987.

In 1989, Brother Firmin Laliberté bequeathed the city the some 100,000 specimens in his scientific collection, which became the starting point for the Insectarium's scientific collection. Many donations have been added over the years, including major collections of ornithoptera from lepidopterist Gilles Deslisle, making the Insectarium the holder of the world's second-largest collection of these magnificent bird-wing butterflies.

DID YOU KNOW ...

The Insectarium follows **strict ethical standards** in procuring butterflies and moths (cocoons and chrysalises), dealing only with suppliers and butterfly farms that meet its ethical criteria. This procurement policy is key to preserving the different lepidoptera species and to ensuring the sustainable development of tropical butterfly populations and local communities.

Contributing to research

The Insectarium, thanks to its staff who care for its collection and its associated researchers, is helping to advance knowledge in the fields of entomology and insect conservation:

- by collaborating with Environment Canada, which calls on the institution's expertise in enforcing CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora);
- by helping to maintain the inventory of vulnerable and threatened species in Quebec;
- by participating in the **Monarch Watch research program** on the migration of monarch butterflies, in co-operation with the University of Kansas;
- by contributing to research on rearing techniques for insects and on growing host plants.
- by updating the nomenclature of certain groups in its collection and by identifying new species: for example, a new species of **scarab beetle** (*Golofa spatha*), existing only in entomological collections in Paris and Montréal, thanks to collaboration with the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle de Paris.

Supporting the Insectarium and sharing knowledge about insects

The **Société des amis de l'Insectarium** (Friends of the Insectarium) is a non-profit organization with the mission of disseminating knowledge about insects and other arthropods and making it widely accessible.

- It was founded in 1991.
- Today it has 3,000 members and 25 volunteers.
- It helps to make the Insectarium and insects better known, by co-ordinating the museum's travelling exhibitions and administering the Monarchs Without Borders program for schools and the public.

The Montréal Insectarium, one of Montréal's Nature Museums

The Insectarium is part of the largest natural science museum complex in Canada, Montréal's Nature Museums, which also includes the Botanical Garden, Biodôme and Planetarium. These four institutions share a common mission: Helping people enjoy nature to the fullest.

The Nature Museums:

- enhancing knowledge of nature and related disciplines;
- contributing to the study and preservation of biodiversity;
- promoting environmentally responsible behaviour.

The Nature Museums' approach focuses on:

- an immersive experience that brings visitors into direct contact with nature;
- the importance of the relationship between humankind and nature;
- the expertise of all its scientific teams and the quality of the information disseminated;
- constant progress in organizational terms and in museology.