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Press Release

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As millions of Monarch butterflies arrive to the hibernation sanctuaries in central Mexico, the ultralight Papalotzin, lands with them, ending a unique 72 days journey

Mexico City – After a 72 days, and 84 hours of flight, the ultralight plane Papalotzin, successfully ended its journey following the Monarch Butterfly migration route which started in Canada on August 22, crossed United States and Mexico, creating enthusiastic support from investigation centers, scientists, Monarch butterfly experts, students and academic institutions as well as government representatives.



“During the journey, and beyond the confines of nationalities, cultures, and locations, we reached thousands of people to talk about the importance the Monarch butterfly conservation, and protection to its habitat. Understanding the cycle of live, migration, and challenges of this small butterfly, which has the ability of fly over 3 thousand miles, gives the humanity a unique message: we can, and should learn to confront the diverse challenges of life,” said Vico Gutierrez, pilot and creator of this project, supported by the Michoacan Government and the WWF-Telcel Alliance.

After flying 3 thousand miles, Papalotzin landed today at Llano de las Papas in Angangueo, Michoacan, one of the Monarch hibernation sanctuaries in Central Mexico. Including a pre-historic ritual and dance, the Papalotzin team was welcomed in a ceremony, together with hundred of villagers. Attending the ceremony were Lazaro Cardenas Batel (Michoacan Governor), and Enrique Peña Nieto (State of Mexico Governor); Omar Vidal, WWF-Mexico Director; Marcela Velasco, Corporative Marketing Director of Telcel; Edward Kadunk, USAID Director, and Tomas Martinez, Municipal President of Angangueo, among others.



“It has been a valuable and unique experience. We interviewed scientist whom provide us with valuable information, such as Lincoln Brower, Chip Taylor, Mike Quinn, and Eduardo Rendon; we also talked to artists and students, and gave around 30 press conferences,” explained Vico, who added that the Papalotzin team filmed 150 hrs of material from expert’s interviews to butterfly gardens, zoos, schools, forests, fields, lakes, cities and industrial areas that the Monarch butterflies cross during their migration route. With all this material and thousands of aerial and terrestrial photographs Papalotzin is planning to produce a one hour documentary about the life, route, and challenges that the Monarch butterflies face.

The ultralight plane, flying at an average of 60 to 70 miles per hour, landed in more than 40 locations in the three countries, describing every day activities and challenges in the interactive website www.papalotzin.com, visited by nearly 12 thousand people.

“From this experience onwards I feel that the butterflies are part of my life. During the journey we had the opportunity to observe the butterflies flying with the air currents at different altitudes some even reached 12,000 miles. We also learnt that there are many people interested in the conservation of our planet, not only willing to protect the Monarch butterfly, but also the forest, desserts, oceans, rivers, plants and animals,” Vico added.

Editor’s notes:

WWF and Telcel signed an agreement for the conservation and sustainable management of the natural resources in Mexico. The WWF- Telcel Alliance is supporting, among other issues, monitoring of forest cover in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, research and local community participation, promoting the importance of conserving the forest and environmental education activities and publications.

Francisco “Vico” Gutierrez

Vico is a delta wing, and ultralight plane pioneer. He started flying when he was only 13 years old! His experience of more than 30 years has taken him throughout the whole country. He has been a pilot with the National Team of free flight and has participated in more than 10 championships worldwide. Vico is a Free Flight and Ultralight instructor in Valle de Bravo, Mexico, and regularly makes films from his ultralight plane for commercials, documentaries and movies. Living in Valle de Bravo, so close to the Monarch

butterfly colonies combined with his love of flying and adventure, secured Vico's commitment to the efforts in the conservation of the remarkable migratory phenomenon of the Monarch.

WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations. WWF was founded in 1961 and is known for its Panda symbol with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries. For more information visit: www.panda.org, and www.wwf.org.mx

Telcel

Telcel, leader in the telecommunications business, recognizes the importance of conservation and sustainable management of natural resources to achieve social and economic development. The environmental responsibility is considered as part of its mission.

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For further information

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www.wwf.org.mx and www.papalotzin.com