



NORTH AMERICAN
BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION

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Visit our website at www.naba.org

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To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is in support of legislation proposed for the City of San Francisco that would ban the release of commercially-raised butterflies. The North American Butterfly Association (NABA), the largest group of people focused on North American butterflies, has worked for years to stop this senseless and destructive activity. Essentially all scientists and naturalists (park rangers, etc.) oppose this activity. There are three broad reasons why dumping farmed butterflies into the environment should be prohibited.

1. Harm to wild butterflies.

It has been demonstrated with other organisms (such as salmon) that diseases that are rife in farmed animals spread to wild populations.

It has also been demonstrated by scientific research that the release of farmed organisms into the environment results in interbreeding with wild populations and that this interbreeding lowers the genetic fitness of the wild populations.

Regarding butterflies specifically, it has been shown (by Dr. Sonia Altizer of the University of Georgia, among others) that commercially raised Monarchs carry a wide range of diseases.

Lastly, allowing the sale of butterflies creates a commercial market for butterflies. Individual Monarchs sell for about \$10 each. There have already been reports of individuals capturing Monarchs at the California overwintering sites to sell to the public.

2. Interference with scientific studies.

NABA, and others, monitor wild butterfly populations to determine whether they are increasing or decreasing. Butterflies are important indicators of the health of the environment. For example, recent range changes of many butterfly species was one of the first signals of the reality of global warming. Dumping farmed butterflies into the environment makes it impossible for scientists to know if the butterflies being seen at various locations are occurring there naturally or have been artificially released into these locations.

3. Butterflies are living animals -- not props for a human circus.

The farmed butterflies that are sent by commercial breeders to well-meaning but naive people, for use at events such as weddings, funerals or corporate meetings, are abused. The adult butterflies are placed in glassine envelopes and shipped, sometimes a very long distance, to customers. When they arrive, the butterflies are often dead or dying (see comments from people present at these events at <http://www.naba.org/readwed.html>).

For all of these reasons, we urge you to support the legislation proposed for San Francisco that would ban the release of commercially raised butterflies into the environment.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Glassberg, Ph.D.

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