



## “Wings of Wonder”

In May, the Insect Committee took a field trip to a local butterfly breeding facility near the Buena Vista ferry in Independence. Bob and Betty Heriford own the business known as “Wings of Wonder”, and have been working on the spacious greenhouse, in which tropical butterflies roam free, for over 4 years. They also have a special building devoted to breeding butterflies. This building is like a sterile environment laboratory so that no diseases or insects can go in or out of the breeding area. The facility is inspected by both state and federal agencies who make sure that the integrity of the sterile environment is not breached. Special permits from the USDA allow Bob and Betty to import certain species from throughout the world. Most of these are in the pupa, or resting stage, which makes transportation to their facility by air a little easier.

The greenhouse is a wonder in itself. It is a 2400 square foot glass enclosure with a temperature controlled environment (at 80 degrees) and a humidity control to allow the dampness of a tropical rain forest. The greenhouse is filled with jungle plants, and it seems as if you have just been transported to Costa Rica or other tropical place as you enter. The amazing thing is that the place is loaded with tropical butterflies, freely flying in all directions. There are nectary plants that allow the butterflies to feed as they float about in the air. Sometimes one or another will land on a visitor, especially if they have on a bright shirt or blouse.

The breeding lab is 1152 sq. feet and is also climatically controlled. The air is kept in a sterile condition so that no contaminants enter or leave the building. You can see larvae of some species growing in one area, notably feeding on artificial food that Bob makes up from a formula. Another area is what they call the honeymoon suite, in which newly emerged butterflies mate and then lay eggs. The eggs are kept sterile on the outside by dipping them in a special solution to kill bacteria, then they are transported to the caterpillar growing area.

Still another area holds pupae of the tropical species that will be released into the greenhouse when the adults emerge. While we were there, several species had just emerged and were expanding their wings, showing off their beautiful, fresh colors.

If you are interested to find out more about this unique facility, you can phone Betty and Bob at 1-503-838-0976 or e-mail at: [betty@wingsofwonder.us](mailto:betty@wingsofwonder.us) and to visit their website log on to: **[www.wingsofwonder.us](http://www.wingsofwonder.us)**

The trip was a wonderful experience for the Insect Committee, and several people commented that they had grandchildren and would like to take them there to see the free flying butterflies. Sort of like a tropical jungle experience in Oregon without the airfare!

