

Butterflies are Free to Fly

By Rebecca Seymour

It was Labor Day weekend and our family took a little trip to Door County and stayed along the shore of Lake Michigan near Sturgeon Bay.

One morning, we woke up early to walk along the beach as the sun came up. It had been windy the day before so the shoreline was littered with bits of treasure offered up by Lake Michigan's frothy surf. Our little girls ran ahead, dodging waves as they picked up teensy shells and chased a grouchy seagull.

Suddenly, our daughter Katie started to screech as she bent down to pick something up off the beach. Half buried in the soupy, wet sand was a beautiful black butterfly.

At first we thought the butterfly was dead, but then one free wing started to flutter as it tried to free itself from the heavy, wet sand. I gently scooped up the critter and placed it in Katie's hand. We watched as it crawled up to her sleeve and clung on, slowly opening and closing its wings.

Looking around, we discovered there were hundreds of butterflies along the stretch of beach caught in the same predicament. "We have to save them," Katie whispered.

For the next hour or so, we walked down the beach gently plucking Mourning Cloak and Monarch butterflies from the sand and placing them on Katie's outstretched arms. The butterflies started to help each other by flicking grains of sand off wings with their proboscis.

We watched in wonder as nearly drowned butterflies slowly came back to life and one by one, as their wings were freed from sand and dried from the sun – they flew off into the sky.

As the morning unfolded, more people ventured out onto the beach. A little girl with butterflies clinging to her outstretched arms was quite the curiosity, and Katie was happy to tell her story about helping the creatures.

It was like a ripple effect – all along the beach people began to bend down to pick up butterflies. It was a morning I will never forget.