The Evergreen State College and Washington State Department of Corrections





CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN PRISONS

The Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) currently offers three conservation projects in three Western Washington prisons. Each project includes a team consisting of a Graduate Student Research Associate, a Faculty Member/ Project Co-Director and a Project Manager at The Evergreen State College; at least one Science Advisor from a partner agency; and staff and inmate technicians at the Washington Department of Corrections (DOC). Each member of the team plays a critical role which allows this unique science, conservation and restoration work to be successful.

TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT BUTTERFLY (Euphydryas editha taylori)

The Taylor's checkerspot butterfly is a state-endangered species and a candidate for listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act. It once flourished from southern British Columbia to central Oregon. Currently there are only a few small, isolated populations of the butterfly remaining, the largest of which is in Washington on the Artillery Impact Area at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The newly established SPP captive rearing facility at Mission Creek Correction Center for Women (MCCCW) adds to the scope and resilience of range-wide recovery efforts and bolsters the established rearing program at the Oregon Zoo.

Since September 2011, inmate technicians at MCCCW have been raising painted lady butterflies to prepare for work with the more delicate Taylor's checkerspots. Painted ladies have a three-week life cycle and afford the inmate technicians repeated practice handling butterflies during vulnerable life stages. Already they have achieved impressive results, raising butterflies 120-140% larger than were produced in the Evergreen lab during protocol development trials, demonstrating their ability to make great contributions to Taylor's checkerspot recovery efforts. Taylor's checkerspot captive rearing begins mid-winter 2012 and the first larvae from MCCCW will be released onto South Sound prairies sometime during June 2012. Butterflies are raised in a custom glass greenhouse purchased with grant funds and constructed by Washington Department of Corrections staff.

OREGON SPOTTED FROG (Rana pretiosa)

The Oregon spotted frog (OSF) (*Rana pretiosa*) is a state-listed endangered species and a candidate for federal listing. This warm water marsh specialist has vanished from an estimated 70% of its historic range. Populations have primarily declined as a result of habitat loss and bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) predation. From 2009-2011, inmates at Cedar Creek Correction Center (CCCC) have successfully raised 311 OSFs, with an average survivorship rate of 77%.



OREGON SPOTTED FROG CONTINUED...

The frogs raised at the prison often reach maturity in a single season and are consistently large compared to other rearing facilities. Inmates are also raising approximately half the crickets needed to feed the frogs. The cricket-rearing effort saves money, and improves program sustainability by reducing the number of crickets that must be purchased and shipped from distributors in the Southeastern US.

Each year OSF eggs are obtained from two donor sites and delivered to CCCC in late winter. Inmates then care for the frogs until early fall when they are ready for release into suitable wetlands. The program at CCCC is supported by other OSF rearing programs at three area zoos. In 2011, field surveys revealed egg masses, evidence that captivereared and subsequently released OSFs are successfully reproducing in the wild.

NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

From 2009-2011 nearly 50 inmates at Stafford Creek Correction Center (SCCC) have raised approximately 580,000 native plants. Inmates receive training and education; prepare and sow seed; and care for approximately 16 different species of rare, threatened, or endangered plant species. Most of the plants raised at SCCC are native to South Puget Lowland prairies. These plants are a critical component of habitat restoration for several prairie-dependent animals such as the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly and Mazama pocket gopher.

Inmates and partners are also engaged in scientific research. One of the questions they have examined is native prairie seed response to fire. Prairie fires have been an integral part of these landscapes in the Pacific Northwest for at least 8,000 years. First Peoples used fire to maintain the extent and function of the prairies. Inmates are helping to identify which prairie plant species germinate in response to the smoke generated by fires. Seeds are sown winter and spring at SCCC and most of the resulting plants are delivered to restoration sites by November each year.

CONTACT US

Carri LeRoy, Ph.D.

Sustainability in Prisons Project Co-Director Member of the Faculty The Evergreen State College Office (360) 867-5483 E-mail: leroyc@evergreen.edu

Kelli Bush

Sustainability in Prisons Project Project Manager The Evergreen State College Office (360) 867-6863 E-mail bushk@evergreen.edu

www.sustainableprisons.org