



## Greater Vancouver Zoo – PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### FIRST ENDANGERED BUTTERFLIES HATCH AT THE GREATER VANCOUVER ZOO

Aldergrove – A native butterfly once thought to be lost from Canada is now making a comeback at the Greater Vancouver Zoo. Over the past several weeks, 88 adult Taylor's Checkerspot butterflies have emerged from their cocoons in the Zoo's new breeding facility, established earlier this spring through a partnership with national charity Wildlife Preservation Canada and the BC Ministry of Environment.

Endangered throughout its North American range, the Taylor's Checkerspot was thought to be permanently gone from Canada in the early 2000's. Then, in 2005, a population was discovered on Denman Island. The Gary Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, Denman Conservancy Association, the province, and local volunteers teamed up in an effort to save the Checkerspots and maintain their habitat.

When it was determined that the recovery effort should include breeding assistance, Wildlife Preservation Canada, which specializes in hands-on recovery techniques such as conservation breeding, was invited to join the project. Starting with just eighteen eggs collected from the wild, a breeding population capable of producing hundreds of new butterflies was established in a small facility operated by the volunteers on Denman Island. In the spring of 2015, the team released nearly 300 caterpillars and over 50 adults into a specially-created butterfly reserve in Denman Island Provincial Park and Protected Area.

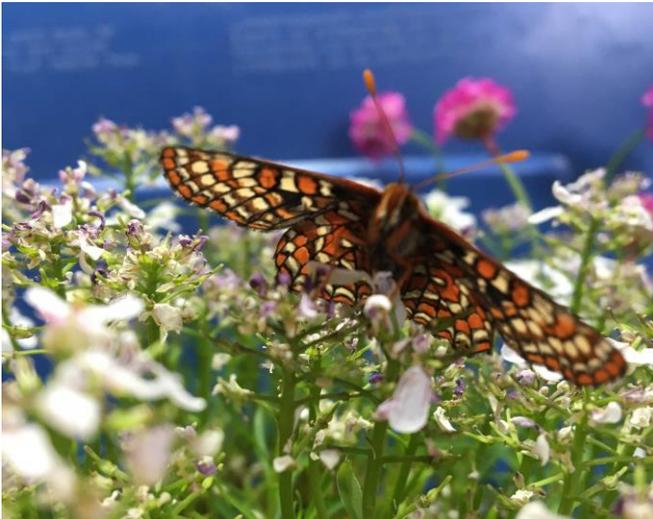
Based on this success, the team wanted to scale up the breeding operation to accelerate the species' recovery. "The volunteers did a heroic job getting it started," said Randal Heide, Executive Director of Wildlife Preservation Canada, "but they were also overwhelmed at times. Everyone agreed that to do it right over the long term, we needed a bigger facility and more access to professional staff. We came up with several possible alternatives, but our first call was to the Zoo, which is already partnering with us in two other endangered species breeding programs. And they didn't hesitate to say yes."

"We are always looking for worthwhile projects that we can contribute our services and facility to support the conservation efforts and to create awareness for endangered species. It is also important for the Zoo to highlight species that most people would not think are struggling and used to naturally occur in a much larger region in the wild, said Jody Henderson, Marketing & Communications Manager of the Greater Vancouver Zoo.

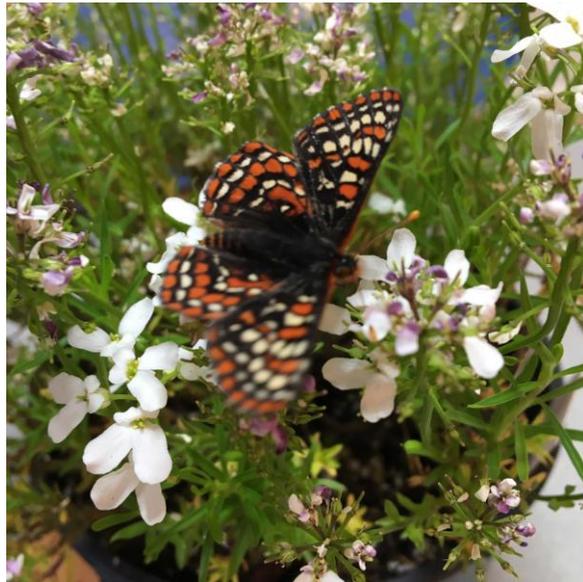
Earlier this spring, nearly 1,300 caterpillars, a fourfold increase over 2015, were released into the carefully enhanced butterfly habitat on Denman Island. Meanwhile, another 100 or so were moved to the Zoo to serve as the next generation of breeders. The 88 adults which emerged will enjoy a naturally brief but happy existence, sipping on their favorite nectars while doing what adult butterflies are meant to do in specially-designed, predator-proof "love shacks" on the Zoo grounds. The result will be several hundreds of eggs to restart the cycle.

"Raising butterflies is more complex than you might think," said Menita Prasad, Animal Care Manager of the Greater Vancouver Zoo, "It's as much an exercise in gardening as it is animal husbandry. In many species, the preferred nectar sources for adults are different from the host plants for the caterpillars. So you need access to a safe, fresh supply of different kinds of plants - and lots of them. You'd be amazed how much those tiny caterpillars can eat."

Each day at 2 pm guests of the Zoo will have an opportunity at the '*Conservation Chat*' to learn a little bit about the Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly and to see some stage of their life cycle.



Caroline Feischl – photo credits



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Going forward, the recovery team hopes to not only rebuild the Denman Island population to a healthy, self-sustaining size, but also to establish other populations by re-introducing the species to restored habitat elsewhere in its original range. "In BC, the Taylor's Checkerspot was usually associated with Garry oak ecosystems, and there's very little of that left, which is probably one of the key reasons why the species almost died out here," says Andrea Gielens, Lead Biologist - BC Projects at Wildlife Preservation Canada. "But restoration efforts are underway or planned at a number of sites, so once those sites are ready, we'll be in a position to put the missing butterflies back into them, where they belong."

In addition to the Greater Vancouver Zoo and Wildlife Preservation Canada, partners in the overall recovery effort include the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team's Invertebrates at Risk Recovery Implementation Group, and Taylor's Checkerspot Community Working Group, the BC Ministry of Environment, BC Parks, BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations, the Denman Conservancy Association, and Environment Canada.

**About Greater Vancouver Zoo**

Since 1970...dedicated to conservation, preservation and protection of endangered species! Our mission is to inspire appreciation of our ecosystems and support conservation efforts by engaging the community. The Greater Vancouver Zoo is an accredited zoo within the Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA), which is a non-profit organization established to promote the welfare of animals and encourage the advancement of education, conservation and science.

**About Wildlife Preservation Canada**

Established in 1985, Wildlife Preservation Canada is a national charity devoted to saving endangered animal species facing imminent extinction in Canada – species whose numbers in the wild are so low that habitat protection alone is not enough. It is currently working with over twenty mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, and insect species in projects ranging from Nova Scotia to Vancouver Island, making it the only organization in Canada to provide hands-on care to multiple species in multiple recovery efforts across the country. For more information, please visit <http://wildlifepreservation.ca>

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To learn more about the good things we do at the Zoo  
visit us at: [www.gvzoo.com](http://www.gvzoo.com) or better yet come visit us in person!

