

# Sustainability in Prisons Project Newsletter

Summer 2014  
Issue 5



An Oregon spotted frog morphs from tadpole to adult. Photo by Jose Morales.

We bring  
science, nature,  
and sustainable  
practices into  
prisons

## The Allison's of Northwest Trek

By SPP Program Manager, Kelli Bush

Since 2009, SPP has partnered with zoos including [Northwest Trek Wildlife Park](#), [Woodland Park Zoo](#), [Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium](#), and [Oregon Zoo](#) to raise Oregon spotted frogs (OSF) at Cedar Creek Corrections Center (CCCC). I would like to highlight the contributions of two generous staff at Northwest Trek: Ms. Allison Abrahamse and Dr. Allison Case.

As Northwest Trek's lead naturalist, Allison Abrahamse is responsible for training and scheduling staff, and operating the excellent education programs for Trek's visitors. In addition, she is the Communications Coordinator for the [Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Group](#). In this role she tracks rearing program statistics, maintains and provides important resources, writes grants, and ensures effective communication within the large group.

Dr. Allison Case is Northwest Trek's Park Veterinarian, and the Associate Veterinarian at Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium. In addition to her roles at these very popular zoos, she provides veterinarian support for the SPP OSF rearing program at



An OSF in its new habitat after release. Photo by Cyril Ruoso.

CCCC. Over the last several years she has provided expert guidance, medications, and pathology services for frogs at CCCC. She says, "It has always been my goal to contribute to conservation through medicine... just one of the small slices in the whole pie of ecosystem and fauna health."

SPP's OSF rearing program lacks the resources commonly found in most zoo-based programs, and our model relies on help from outside organizations. Together we are working toward the common goal of species recovery. We are so grateful to our many partners including the wonderful Allison's: Thank you Dr. Allison Case and Ms. Allison Abrahamse.

### Zoo Partners Issue

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## A Transformative Project

Adapted from an article by [Caitlin Feldman](#)

Originally published June 12, 2014 in the Portland Tribune

It's the first day of leaf harvesting for a crew of women at Coffee Creek Corrections Center, and everybody wants to do it right. The women listen attentively to instructions of volunteers from the [Oregon Zoo](#); they explain that one cup of early blue violet (*Viola adunca*) leaves need to be collected during this session. By August, the crew will be collecting 100 cups a week. In that cup, only tiny leaves are necessary, because they'll be fed to tiny caterpillars, which will eventually become Oregon Silverspot butterflies. But, as the caterpillars grow, the size of the harvested leaves will grow, too.

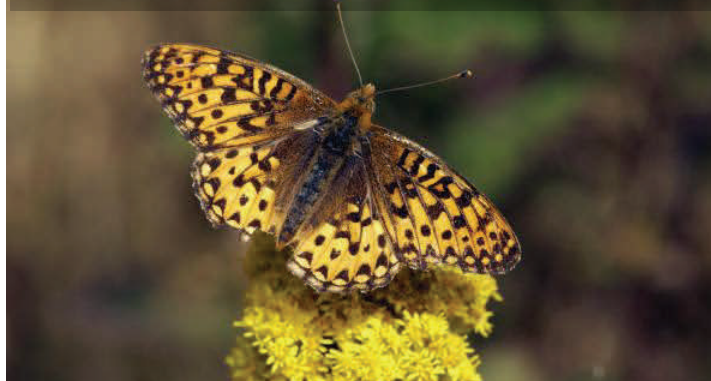


Carl Schaefer, a horticulture volunteer with the Oregon Zoo, watches as Coffee Creek Correctional Facility inmates Bridgette Lewis and Crystal Magana harvest the first blue violet leaves at the Hoop House at the women's prison in Wilsonville. TIMES PHOTO: JAIME VALDEZ

The endangered butterflies, which are native to the Oregon coast, are part of a restoration project through the zoo, which has partnered with Coffee Creek. It is spearheaded by Chad Naugle (SPP-Oregon), who has been in charge of all the prison's sustainability projects and recently received a Director's Award through the Oregon Department of Corrections for his efforts. "This is a project I'm extremely proud of," he said. For many members of the crew, opportunities like this are what they look forward to. When they call home, it's what they discuss. When they write letters, it's what they mention. More than one of the women said it's these programs and skills that will keep them from returning to a criminal lifestyle once they're released.

As the women group together around the plants and help each other snip off only the smallest leaves, a sense of teamwork and purpose is clear. It's easy to forget they're in custody, because that's not what this is about. It's about coming together for a common goal and seeing it through. That's what they're here for, and that's what they'll take with them. Jennifer Bechtel, 28, an inmate at Coffee Creek who has worked with the violet plants since the beginning, simplified it best. "We're saving a whole species," she said. "That's pretty cool."

Photo from <http://www.oregonzoo.org/conserve/fighting-extinction-pacific-northwest/oregon-silverspot-butterfly>.



The tiny blue violet leaf is the size inmates at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility harvest for caterpillars at the Oregon Zoo. TIMES PHOTO: JAIME VALDEZ



## Director's Corner

**Dr. Carri LeRoy**

In March, I had the pleasure of presenting at an in-prison TEDx event hosted by Monroe Correctional Complex outside of Seattle, WA. TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, in the form of a series of short talks. The event was only the second TEDx ever to be held in-prison, and the range and depth of topics were inspiring and illuminating. You can read about the event (<http://www.ted.com/tedx/events/11190>) and watch all of the talks at <http://goo.gl/ojqut8>.

Dan Pacholke, my partner in directing SPP and now Deputy Secretary for Washington State Department of Corrections, shared his compelling vision for the



A Taylor's checkerspot transforms into a butterfly. Photo by Rod Gilbert.

future of prisons. I described how the power of nature can transform the prison experience. Watching caterpillars transform into butterflies, eggs into frogs, and seeds into plants can provide opportunities for inmates to witness metamorphoses in nature, potentially encouraging internal transformations and definitely changing the face of prisons today.

I am grateful to the many zoo partners that make SPP's conservation programs possible. Without their help, our programs would not be as successful, and we certainly could not have endangered animals in prison. Our partnerships with scientists at zoos, state agencies and non-profits are critical to the success of our programs. TEDx events are meant to activate deep conversation and connections at the local level, and this one re-energized my commitment to this work and all of our partners in the effort to restore endangered species to healthy habitats.

## Partner Profile

In her current position as a curator at Woodland Park Zoo, Jennifer Pramuk oversees their endangered Oregon spotted frog and western pond turtle rearing (“headstarting”) and release programs. Jenny is well versed on issues particular to reintroduction of endangered species, including disease mitigation and political and medical concerns. It comes as no surprise when Jenny says, “By the time I was six years old, I knew that I wanted to be a herpetologist (although I didn’t know that this is what a reptile and amphibian specialist was called).”

Jenny is also a partner in SPP's Oregon spotted frog rearing program. Jenny says about her experience with SPP, "My most memorable moment was seeing the frogs from Cedar Creek Correctional Center being released for my first time. Their frogs are always beautiful." We value our collaboration with Jenny and look forward to more work with her in the future.



Jennifer Pramuk is a Curator at Woodland Park Zoo.  
Photo by Ron Gagliardo.

# Singing the Praises of the Oregon Zoo

By Lindsey Hamilton, SPP Taylor's checkerspot program coordinator

Founded in 1888, the [Oregon Zoo](#) (ORZ), located in Portland, is the oldest zoo west of the Mississippi. Having grown tremendously from housing just one grizzly bear, ORZ currently cares for over 2000 individual animals, including 21 endangered species. ORZ actively works to [restore populations of native species](#) in the Pacific Northwest ranging from tiny butterflies to the continent's largest bird, the California condor. Since 2007, the zoo has worked with conservation partners,



Taylor's checkerspot larva feeding on plantain in SPP's rearing program which has flourished with help from the Oregon Zoo. Photo by SPP staff.

including SPP, to restore Oregon spotted frog populations. ORZ is part of the effort that has released more than 3000 frogs into the wild.

ORZ also [breeds and releases the endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterfly](#) to build populations and restore the butterfly to the remaining habitat available in its historic range. A captive rearing program established at ORZ has made tremendous progress in developing captive rearing protocols, which has led to large numbers of Taylor's checkerspot caterpillars returned to the wild.

Support from ORZ has been crucial to the success of [SPP's Taylor's checkerspot captive rearing program](#).

Butterfly staff continually provide training and guidance on husbandry protocol, data management, and problem solving. This includes making trips out to Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW) several times a year, helping with needed supplies and answering endless phone calls and emails. This generous and consistent support will continue to be critical to the success of SPP's rearing program as student coordinators graduate and inmate technicians are released, creating a two year turnover. Over the past three years, the ORZ and SPP programs jointly have released over 11,000 checkerspots at various life stages from egg to pupa on sites both on and off of [Joint Base Lewis-McChord](#).

## In-Prison Database for the Butterflies, Thanks to Karen Lewis

The Taylor's checkerspot butterfly was federally listed as an Endangered Species in October of 2013, which means that anyone working with this species is held to the highest accountability and rigorous reporting. The trick was figuring out how to meet new reporting requirements in-prison.

Karen Lewis of the Oregon Zoo created the Access database used for the rearing program at the zoo. She worked with SPP to make the same database accessible to our butterfly technicians. A computer containing the database was set up in a common living area within the facility last fall, and as simple as that sounds, it represents a major accomplishment for a prison environment!

Happily, working with the database is a new training opportunity for the technicians at MCCCW. Plus, with two years of back logged data that needs to be entered, the technicians will have more to keep them busy this winter when our caterpillars are sleeping.



## SPP-Ohio and the Ohio Wildlife Center

by Kristi Kramlauf and Leah Morgan

Several Ohio prisons are working in tandem with the Ohio Wildlife Center (OWC) to help rear native orphaned wildlife (song-birds, rabbits, squirrels, and opossums) and raise mealworms to help offset food costs: Marysville Ohio Reformatory for Women, Marion Correctional Institution, London Correctional Institution, Southeastern Correctional Institution, and Noble Correctional Institution.

The inmates have received training on wildlife rehabilitation by Ohio Wildlife Center staff members, and each institution is helping to return *hundreds* of injured and orphaned animals back into their native habitats.



An inmate releases sparrows and robins for the wildlife rescue program at the Southeastern Correctional Complex in Lancaster (SCC-L); the ducks and squirrel are from the same program. Photos provided by Leah Morgan, Energy Conservation and Sustainability Administrator for Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.



Roughly 1000 animals are given a second chance thanks to the partnership with these institutions. OWC is funded solely by donations, and all of these programs are supplied through generous donations of caring individuals invested in the success of Ohio's native wildlife. This project one of many and part of an overall partnership between Ohio Corrections, the [Ohio Wildlife Center](#), [the Columbus Zoo](#), and [the Wilds](#).



## Mesocosms & Oregon spotted frogs

SPP is partnering with Jenny Pramuk (see page 3) and Alyssa Borek at Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) to investigate the potential for mesocosms as Oregon spotted frog rearing habitat. Mesocosms are lab-created to resemble a natural environment as closely as possible, while still permitting controlled conditions and monitoring. These habitats could potentially be a boon for raising the state-endangered frogs in captivity, and SPP is thrilled to work with Woodland Park Zoo to contribute to the research.

SPP staff member and Evergreen Graduate Student Bri Morningred is working with Jenny and Alyssa to conduct her thesis research. She is comparing water quality conditions between mesocosms and traditional rearing environments. Bri's results will likely inform better mesocosm design for the frog rearing programs at Cedar Creek Corrections Center and area zoos.



### The Sustainability in Prisons Project

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## Sustainability in Prisons Project Vision

The mission of the Sustainability in Prisons Project is to bring science and nature into prisons. We conduct ecological research and conserve biodiversity by forging collaborations with scientists, inmates, prison staff, students, and community partners. Equally important, we help reduce the environmental, economic, and human costs of prisons by inspiring and informing sustainable practices.

This union of ideas and activities—and people inside and outside prison walls—creates a collaborative, intellectually stimulating environment in which incarcerated men and women play key roles in conservation and the advancement of scientific knowledge. We encourage teamwork, mutual respect, and a stewardship ethic among individuals who typically have little or no access to nature or opportunities in science and sustainability. To donate to the project, please go to: <http://goo.gl/jkYHF7>.



Western pond turtle at Cedar Creek Corrections Center.  
Photo by Jose Morales