

## Benton County Special Management Species: Taylor's checkerspot butterfly

### TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT BUTTERFLY

(*Euphydryas editha taylori*) is a butterfly native to the Willamette Valley and as is only known to survive in a few isolated populations in Oregon and Washington. They are one of the first butterflies to appear in spring, but adults only live for a week or two.

The preferred plant for adult butterflies to lay eggs on and for caterpillars to eat is the non-native British (narrow leaf) plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). The larvae emerge to feed on the host plant in mid-June to early July, then enter diapause (a period of dormancy) until the following spring, where they create a chrysalis and hatch as adult butterflies. Many native species like buttercups and wild strawberry are important nectar plants for Taylor's checkerspot.

The Willamette Valley was historically grassy prairie dominated by oak trees. When human development increased, prairieland shrunk which endangered many species. Less than one percent of the original prairie habitat that once existed is still present today.<sup>1</sup> That means that Taylor's checkerspot butterflies have lost more than 99% of their original habitat.



Photo: A Varna, USFWS

Taylor's checkerspot butterflies also use other plants as hosts, including the harsh paintbrush, marsh speedwell, American brooklime and thyme-leaved speedwell. Caterpillars may feed more broadly on other plants.

Powerline corridors provide open habitat for Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. The estimated population of Taylor's checkerspot butterflies along these corridors in the Willamette Valley as of 2004 was about 1,000 butterflies. There was also an additional population of an estimated 500 Taylor's checkerspot butterflies identified in Beazell Memorial Forest in 2004.

### FLUTTERING FRIENDS

There are many organizations and programs involved in recovering Taylor's checkerspot butterflies in the Pacific Northwest, including fish and game agencies, The Oregon Zoo, the Sustainability in Prisons Project, the Mission Creek Correction Center for Women, and Coffee Creek Correctional facilities, Washington Department of Corrections, and The Evergreen State College. These organizations help collect eggs, and raise and release caterpillars so they can grow into adult butterflies which contribute to wild populations. The first release of Nelson's checkerspot larvae was near Corvallis in 2018.<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Black, S. H., and D. M. Vaughan. 2005. Species Profile: *Icaricia icarioides fenderi*. In Shepherd, M. D., D. M. Vaughan, and S. H. Black (Eds). Red List of Pollinator Insects of North America. CD-ROM Version 1 (May 2005). Portland, OR: The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Zoo: Fighting Extinction. Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. Accessed online 5 April 2022. <https://www.oregonzoo.org/conservation/fighting-extinction-pacific-northwest/taylor-checkerspot-butterfly>

<sup>3</sup> Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Species in Washington: Taylor's checkerspot. Accessed online 5 April 2022. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/euphydryas-editha-taylori#conservation>