

Sustainability in Prisons Project Newsletter



Summer 2017
Issue 10



Programs near
& far

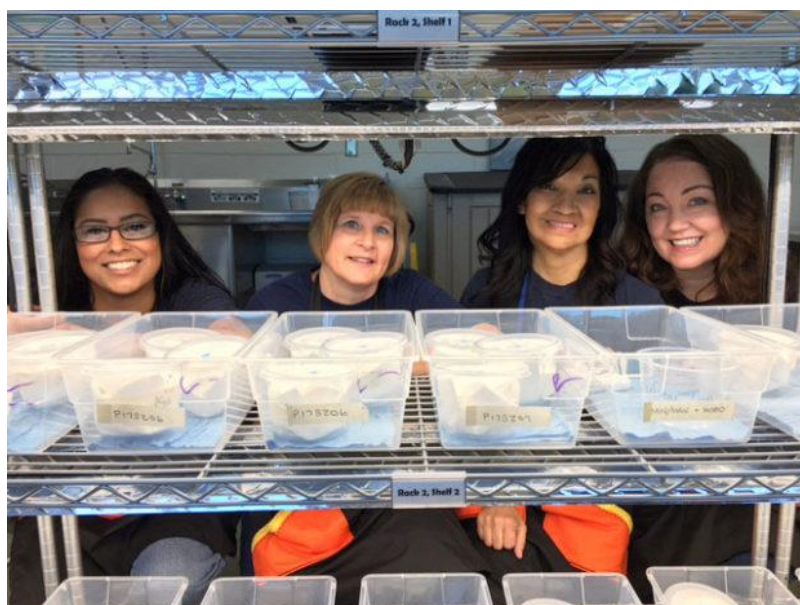
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Environmental programs in corrections, near and far

By Kelli Bush, SPP Acting Director for Evergreen, and Joslyn Rose Trivett, SPP Education and Outreach Manager

Our summer newsletter highlights a selection of environmental programs in corrections. Most of these programs have been replicated across the country, and we have included a few international examples. Beyond these examples, environmental and sustainability programs are operating in prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities nationwide and around the world. Many extend the SPP-style model of ensuring benefits for *everyone* involved—these are not just cost saving measures.



In an Oregon prison, butterfly technicians pose with their larvae, growing in cups under energy-efficient LED bulbs. From left to right: Marisol, Carolyn, Mary, Sarah. Photo by Tom Kaye or Chad Naugle.

In these articles, we share perspectives from inmates, corrections staff, and outside-prison partners, demonstrating the collaborative nature of the work. Connections with allied environmental programs have strengthened a growing movement to offer environmental education, access to nature, and sustainable living skills to incarcerated people. We get to continually learn from each other to improve and expand programs, collaborate on new initiatives and evaluate impacts.



Dog handlers of Freedom Tails at Stafford Creek Corrections Center pose for Atsuko Otsuka, freelance journalist and author, consultant for the Guide Dog Puppy-Raising Program and the Horse Program at Shimane Asahi Rehabilitation Program Center in Japan.

Together we are inviting people who are incarcerated to recognize the significance and relevance of their skills, talents, and contributions to the environmental movement. Honoring their creativity, experience, and resilience and adding the power of education creates potential for positive shifts in self-perceptions and agency. At the same time, we are working to add diverse and talented stewards to the environmental movement.

As a result of this growing movement, beekeeping is

thriving in multiple states. Environmental education in correctional facilities is no longer so uncommon. Countless prisons are creating new standards for reclaiming and revaluing resources the rest of us are too likely to throw away. In Washington, we can barely keep up with the excitement and demands for sustainability programs in prisons. It is wonderful to be part of something big-hearted, socially inclusive, and life affirming!

SPP-model programs: Possibilities for Japan

Text and photos by [Atsuko Otsuka](#), freelance journalist and author, consultant for the Guide Dog Puppy-Raising Program and the Horse Program at [Shimane Asahi Rehabilitation Program Center](#) in Japan



Technicians at the Sustainable Practice Lab at Monroe Correctional Complex proudly point to the "Thank you" poster from the recipients. Photo by Atsuko Otsuka.

I've been working with the [Prison Pet Partnership](#) at [Washington Corrections Center for Women](#) (WCCW) for years, and I've become fascinated with the [Sustainability in Prisons Project](#) (SPP). I've written several books about the benefits of animal programs in correctional facilities, and I've successfully worked with the Japanese Ministry of Justice to establish the first dog programs in Japanese correctional facilities. My goal is to find ways to create more programs in Japan similar to those of SPP. I strongly believe

that they offer a way to improve our society, the lives of our incarcerated populations, and the planet.



Students stop at the garden after attending a Seeds to Supper class at Stafford Creek Corrections Center. Photo by Atsuko Otsuka.

Over the past few years, I've had the privilege of visiting many correctional facilities in Washington where SPP is an important part of their programming and culture. My journey began with WCCW, [Cedar Creek](#) and [Larch](#) Corrections Centers. This year, I added visits to [Mission Creek](#), [Stafford Creek](#),

[Airway Heights](#) and [Monroe Correctional Complex](#). During these visits, I saw many wonderful programs that are expanding the worlds of the people incarcerated there, by giving them both environmental education and the opportunity to become better stewards of the earth. I was particularly impressed that all of the SPP programs I saw were designed to help their participants gain self-esteem and redemption by creating a way for them to give back to society. The passion and pride expressed by the program participants that I met was not only inspiring, but infectious.

Learn more about [Atsuko](#) and the programs at [Shimane Asahi Rehabilitation Program Center](#).

Butterfly conservation takes flight in Oregon prison

Text by Ronda Naseth, Oregon Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Program Coordinator, [Oregon Zoo](#)
Photos by Tom Kaye, [Institute for Applied Ecology](#), and Chad Naugle, [Oregon Department of Corrections](#)

The excitement generated by the new Butterfly Conservation Lab at [Coffee Creek Correctional Facility](#) is both palpable and contagious to anyone who visits. The buzz began this spring. [Oregon Zoo](#) staff began training program technicians to receive egg clusters and to raise larvae. At the same time, staff and inmates – skilled in trades from plumbing to quilting – worked to transform an empty room into a fully functioning, bright, and beautiful lab. The work being done here is groundbreaking: it expands recovery efforts for the endangered Taylor's



The butterfly crew stands under a quilt created for the lab by Oregon Corrections Enterprises quilters. From left to right: Marisol, Ronda, Mary, Sarah, Carolyn.

Checkerspot Butterfly from [Washington](#) to Oregon, and brings butterfly conservation work into a medium facility housing unit for the first time.

The technicians' dedication to the work is reflected in successes so far this season. Their attentiveness allowed them to capture video of the first larvae hatching from their eggs. They enthusiastically

welcomed 150 "ninjas" that were overlooked as egg clusters but suddenly appeared as larvae on our host plants. Recently, they accepted the responsibility for care of a single Oregon Zoo butterfly which elected to skip diapause (a period of dormancy, somewhat similar to hibernation), and head straight into pupation and adulthood several months ahead of schedule.



Sarah shows how larvae have begun webbing in preparation for diapause.

Ultimately, the technicians' care has resulted in a 95% survival rate, measuring from the time the larvae were first big enough to count to entering diapause. Our program goals include having 500 larvae survive diapause in order to be released to the field next spring; with 935 healthy larvae currently ready to head into the overwintering stage, we are optimistic we will meet this goal!

Staff and technicians alike are deservedly proud of their work and of the lab itself. They actively seek opportunities to share their space and their new knowledge. They host tours, speak about the program at Toastmasters gatherings, and participate in special activities such as CCCF's annual *Through A Child's Eyes* event and a recent science lecture and media visit. Technicians share larval development with other women on their unit by displaying photos and information on the lab windows. In the technicians' words:

"When I go to our butterfly lab, I feel a sense of peace in a world of chaos. I have a rare opportunity to sustain the life of an endangered species, which gives me a unique reward of being able to give peace back into the world."
~ Sarah

"This program gives me an opportunity to give back to the Earth and not take things for granted." ~ Marisol

"The Butterfly Program has been very beneficial to me, as I know I'm doing something good for the environment. I also love the opportunity to work with a wonderful team!" ~ Mary

"To be involved in this program means I am given the opportunity to be involved in my community here at Coffee Creek as well as an extension to the outside community through our partnership with the Oregon Zoo, ultimately helping to change Oregon's environment one butterfly at a time." ~ Carolyn



Marisol shows a lab visitor how larvae climb to the lids of their cups to bask in the light.

Sagebrush in Prisons

By Stacy Moore, Institute for Applied Ecology Program Director, Ecological Education, and Joslyn Rose Trivett, SPP Education & Outreach Manager

"For the first time in my life I'm actually doing something right and I'm making a difference. Most importantly, I believe in what we do more than anything else in my life." ~ Lawrence Jenkins, Washington State Penitentiary, Walla Walla, Washington

"Yes, I've made mistakes, we all have, but the one I don't want to make is missing the chance to give back to the world that has taken care of me. Given the chance, you will see the goodness in us all." ~ Toby Jones, Warner Creek Correctional Facility, Lakeview, Oregon (longer quote [here](#))



The sage-grouse in the project's new logo was drawn by a sagebrush program technician, Lawrence Jenkins.



These women work with and learn about sagebrush in the program at Montana Women's Prison (MWP). Photo by IAE staff.

The [Sagebrush in Prisons Project](#) is a multi-state restoration program including corrections center nurseries located in [six western states](#). The effort is led by the [Institute for Applied Ecology](#) (IAE), a founding partner of [SPP-Oregon](#), with funding from the [Bureau of Land Management](#) (BLM).



Captain McCorkhill at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility helps load plugs ready for fall planting. Photo by IAE staff.

The programs grow sagebrush for restoration of greater sage-grouse habitat and to provide restoration ecology education and training to incarcerated men and women. Inmate crews, staff, and educators assist BLM in planting sagebrush each fall/early winter. We estimate that these programs will plant **445,000 sagebrush plants this fall.**

The Sagebrush in Prisons Project completes the full circle of a native plant's life: from seed collection to sowing, daily care, and then planting mature plants in the fall. The program is a win-win-win for the inmates, community and the environment. Inmates giving back to the community gain a new perspective on how we treat our natural heritage and each other. The community and local habitats benefit through healthier ecosystems and more wildlife.

The program generates balance within our environment and within the everyday lives of incarcerated individuals. It gives them some access to work valued by communities inside and outside the fence, and also may be a source of meaning and pride.



The planting crew from Snake River Correctional Institution take a moment to pose with their sagebrush plugs. Photo by Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) staff.

It is gratifying, and impressive, to see a complex conservation program replicated and maintaining integrity in a variety of corrections systems—speaks to the strength of the model! Just as gratifying is to hear what the incarcerated technicians think of the program, and what it has meant in their lives. Here are more quotes from the project, these from Idaho State Correctional Center's program, said by crew members as they boxed up sagebrush plugs for planting last October:

“In 19 years this is the first time I’ve been able to give back to the community.”

“It is a sanctuary out here. This is a huge blessing.”

“This brings inmates together when we can work on a project like this. It breaks the walls down where it doesn’t feel like prison so much.”

We are grateful to the inmates, corrections staff, educators, and partners who make Sagebrush in Prisons Project possible and successful. It's a dream come true.

Making the difference for wildlife and inmates on the England and Wales Prison and Probation Service Estate

By Dr Phil Thomas PhD. FRSA. FIEG. MCIEEM, Ecology Lead for the UK Ministry of Justice Estates Cluster



Prisoners survey for bats at HMP Dartmoor. Photo ©Phil Thomas

I often ask myself the question: will the habitats and amazing native species still be here, and will they be here when my children's children are grown up? Will they be reflecting on what could have been?

Where does the [Ministry of Justice](#) (MoJ) and [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service](#) (HMPPS) fit into nature and wildlife, and how does it reflect in its aim of serving the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts? Our duty is to look after inmates with humanity, to help them lead law-abiding and useful lives whilst in custody and following release. I'm glad to say that MoJ and HMPPS take these responsibilities seriously.

HMPPS estate is one of the largest within the MoJ portfolio, and the MoJ Estates Cluster is one of the largest built and non-built rural estates in UK Government. Thus, we face quite a challenge in protecting the property's native flora and fauna.

MoJ and HMPPS takes this responsibility seriously as well, so much so it implemented one of the first UK Government Department Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). This goes some way to supporting the UK's commitment to halting species' decline, as well as fulfilling MoJ's and HMPPS obligations to a sustainable and compliant Government estate.



Prison staff on a biodiversity course within the woodland management module. Photo ©Phil Thomas

A wealth and diversity of wildlife lives and thrives around individual prison sites; with over 147 prisons across the HMPPS estate in England and Wales, the diversity of wildlife is quintessentially very rich. There are nine prison sites which are nationally important Sites of Special Scientific

Interest (SSSIs), including two European designated sites and two sites which are internationally

designated for their wetlands and wading birds. With another 39+ sites of county and local biodiversity significance, the MoJ and its MoJ Ecology network are significantly challenged.

Social and Community Impacts



Prisoners on a biodiversity course within the woodland management module. Photo © Phil Thomas.

The MoJ Ecology network and HMPPS recognises that the actions and targets it has set for biodiversity can only be achieved through active support from corrections' staff, and prisoners and local partners. By encouraging staff and prisoner involvement in all aspects of biodiversity within its estate, and through local community projects, HMPPS and the MoJ Ecology network can broaden its sustainable operations' and social impacts agenda.

HMPPS and the MoJ Ecology network believe it's important that all members of staff and prisoners should have access to green space and the natural world, for enjoyment, education and wellbeing. Nature's biological diversity remains a source of

constant enjoyment in people's lives. Both the MoJ Ecology network and HMPPS aims to build upon its past successes in this field, to help form and bond closer links with prisoners and those that work in the local community promoting and protecting wildlife. Forming new partnerships and locally driven initiatives will aid in delivering BAPs, protecting important and declining wildlife, and in addressing other important social, health and wellbeing issues for inmates and staff.

The MoJ Ecology network and HMPPS consider that active management of its designated and wildlife significant sites and natural green spaces can improve the wellbeing of individuals, encourage Restorative Justice, and address offending behaviour programmes for prisoners. As the MoJ Ecology network and HMPPS works alongside such partners as [Natural England](#), the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#), [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#), [County Wildlife Trusts](#) and other nationally recognised wildlife groups and various academics, it demonstrates how wildlife and life's rich tapestry can have widespread benefits. This includes communities beyond the prison environments—prisoners can do meaningful work that benefits local communities, and obtain transferable learning and skills that will help them secure stable employment on release.



This is one of the two hundred barn owl boxes erected on the prison estate. Photo ©Phil Thomas

Broadening the opportunities for nature conservation and wildlife protection by developing activities that are enjoyable and inclusive for both staff and inmates enables them to explore and improve the sustainability of their everyday life choices and how they impact wildlife and the outside community. These opportunities are a key tool, in delivering such events and activities as our [national BioBlitzes](#), our national Biodiversity Day and the annual HMPPS Wildlife Award.

The MoJ Ecology network and HMPPS considers that involving inmates in the protection of wildlife, events such as the HMPPS Wildlife Award, and managing priority habitats can give them a sense of accomplishment, a sense of achievement and more importantly, a sense of pride in themselves. Together these feelings and emotions can help prisoners not only get in touch with themselves, but help them become positive and active members of society and their local communities once more.

To learn more about these programs:

[Prisoners build over 10,000 nest boxes for rare hazel dormice,](#)

[People's Trust for Endangered Species](#), 2016

[Ministry of Justice and its Biodiverse Estate](#), National Biodiversity Network, 2014

[Birdwatching takes flight in Britain's prisons](#), BBC News, 2011

[Jailbirds creating eco-havens in prison](#), The Observer, 2008

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Nature Imagery in Prisons Project

By Nalini Nadkarni, SPP Co-Founder, John Wasiutynski, Director of the Office of Sustainability for Multnomah County, and Joslyn Rose Trivett, SPP Education and Outreach Manager

The human race has been intimately connected with and dependent upon nature throughout its history. Our species gains numerous physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health benefits through contact with the natural world; this has been strongly demonstrated by research in a variety of settings (see [library](#) curated by the Children's Nature Network, and [another](#) compiled by a member of the faculty at University of Washington's [College of the Environment](#)).

For some people, contact with nature and the outdoors is difficult or impossible. People incarcerated in "segregation", maximum security areas, do not have access to the "yard" or any outdoor areas inside or outside prison fences. In these cases, vicarious nature video experiences may be the only possible contact with nonhuman nature. Nature videos cannot provide full relief from the many emotional, cognitive, and physical stresses associated with



Dr. Nalini Nadkarni querying inmate on which of a variety of nature images are most appealing prior to showing videos in solitary confinement cellblocks, Washington Corrections Center, Shelton, Washington. Photo by Benj Drummond.

[segregation](#), but they can reduce stress, aggression, and other negative emotions. Plus, providing nature imagery to inmates imposes little additional burden on corrections staff.

Championed and supported by an inspired team, [Nature Imagery in Prisons Project](#) (NIPP) is gaining traction

as a new standard for segregated housing and other areas of prisons. The NIPP team first conducted a study at [Snake River Correctional Institution](#) in Oregon, which resulted in definitive [findings](#). Interviews of staff members revealed that although many were initially skeptical about offering nature imagery to inmates, by the end of the year-long study the majority of staff recognized the offering as potentially valuable. Staff respondents agreed that the inmates became calmer after viewing the videos, and that these effects lasted for hours, with less

violent behaviors and fewer angry outbursts by inmates.

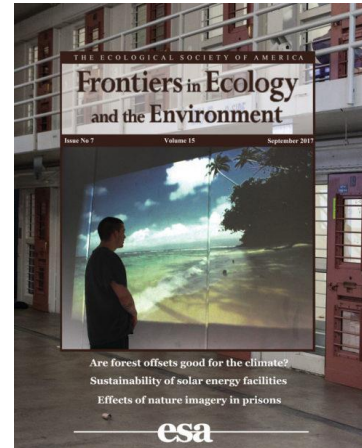
Incarcerated individuals in the program reported feeling significantly calmer, less irritable, and more empathetic. Analyses of prison records revealed that those inmates who watched nature videos committed 26% fewer violent



Multnomah County Sheriff's Office improved Inverness Jail's Treatment Readiness Dorm with nature imagery. It's a small change that creates a noticeable shift in the character of the room. Inmates' response to this pilot was unanimously positive; following this success, staff have added nature imagery to nearly all the dorms in the two jails. Photo by Alene Davis.

infractions compared to those without videos. More detailed program results are available in the January 2017 issue of [Corrections Today](#) and a [research brief](#) from Oregon Youth Authority.

Nature Imagery in Prisons Project has gained high-level media attention from [Time magazine](#), [MSNBC](#), and the [Oregonian](#), and will be the cover story for [Frontiers of Ecology and the Environment](#) in September. As of August, 2017, there are active and in-development programs in Alaska, Nebraska, Florida, Oregon, Wisconsin, Utah, and [Washington State](#). Oregon ([Multnomah County](#) and state corrections) and Washington State have extended the concept beyond segregation, offering nature imagery in computer labs, staff areas, day rooms, and mental health/therapeutic-focused living units.



Results from the Snake River program and staff and inmate testimonials suggest that exposure to nature imagery can be helpful. It is a low-cost, low impact intervention that is helpful in reducing disciplinary referrals, violent behavior, physiological states, and connections and reconnections to nature. More research is needed to understand specific elements of the program, and inform application nationwide.

Acknowledgments: The research team for this project includes Tierney Thys, Patricia Hasbach, Emily Gaines, and Lance Schnacker. Funding was provided by the [National Science Foundation](#), the [University of Utah](#), and an anonymous donor.



Photo: Ricky Osborne

[Sustainability in Prisons Project](#) (SPP) brings environmental education, science, and nature into prisons. We work cooperatively with diverse individuals and organizations to create benefits inside and outside the fence. To learn more, contact spp@evergreen.edu and visit social media:

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