



Coffee Creek inmates help raise hundreds of endangered butterflies

FOX 12 Staff

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Oregon Zoo keeper Julia Low (foreground) shows a jar of tiny butterfly larvae to Coffee Creek inmates and correction officials during a tour of the zoo's butterfly lab last year. Photo by Michael Durham, courtesy of the Oregon Zoo.

ORTLAND, OR (KPTV) - Thanks to inmates at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, hundreds of endangered butterflies will return to the wild in Oregon.

The Oregon Zoo said inmates at Coffee Creek raised and cared for Taylor's checkerspot butterfly larvae over the past year as part of a program with the zoo, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Institute for Applied Ecology.

https://www.kptv.com/news/coffee-creek-inmates-help-raise-hundreds-of-endangered-butterflies/article_8f117e62-5250-11e9-aaef-972aedadd07.html

The zoo said 476 of the growing caterpillars were transferred last week to conservation biologists at USFWS. Those caterpillars will be released on western Oregon prairies near Corvallis.

Another 246 caterpillars are scheduled for release this week.

Last year, 562 Coffee-Creek reared caterpillars were released into the wild.

"Having a captive rearing and release program in Oregon is vital for the recovery of Taylor's checkerspots," said Oregon Zoo butterfly conservationist Ronda Naseth, who advises the program at Coffee Creek. "Bringing butterfly conservation work into a medium-security housing unit continues to be a rewarding process."

The caterpillars will complete their development in the wild, according to the zoo.

The zoo said that Coffee Creek's butterfly conservation lab launched in May 2017, with funding from USFWS and the help of an Oregon Zoo Foundation grant. Zoo staff taught inmates how to care for butterfly eggs and raise larvae.

Along with the Taylor's checkerspots, the zoo said another team of inmates care for and harvest plantago plants, which feed the larvae.

To learn more about the Oregon Zoo's effort to save Taylor's checkerspots, visit www.oregonzoo.org/conservation/fighting-extinction-pacific-northwest/taylor-checkerspot-butterfly.

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