

The Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly is Maryland's official state insect and sports the same colors as Maryland's state flag. The numbers of this butterfly are declining at an alarming rate throughout the state. The Baltimore Checkerspot was last documented in Howard County in 1997. Like many butterflies, the adult Baltimore Checkerspot seeks out one plant to lay its' eggs on to feed the emerging caterpillars. This plant is the native wildflower, turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*). Turtlehead grows in wet meadows or along stream banks. If populations of turtlehead disappear, so does the Baltimore Checkerspot.



Some reasons for the decline of the Baltimore Checkerspot...

- Habitat destruction – It is believed that wetlands have been impacted by development, which has led to a decline in turtlehead populations.
- Deer – It is also believed that deer have an effect on turtlehead populations. When deer eat the tops of the plants, they often eat any eggs that may have been laid on the plant.

How can we restore habitat?

- Increase the abundance of Turtlehead - in 2000, Turtlehead plants were established in 4 parks and exclosures were built around the plants to protect them from browsing deer.
- Manage the county's deer population - the county hired a Deer Project Manager to monitor the deer population and implement a comprehensive deer management plan.

Reintroduction Efforts

In the fall of 2000, the County obtained caterpillars from a butterfly farmer in Montgomery County. All necessary permits to import these caterpillars were obtained. The caterpillars came from Massachusetts where the Baltimore Checkerspot is more common. Two hundred caterpillars were released into the planting areas and monitored. Caterpillars face many threats in their short life cycle.

Threats include:

- parasitic wasps
- birds
- flooding from heavy rains
- aerial spraying of pesticides for gypsy moths
- fungal infections



Success

Despite the dangers, several butterflies did emerge. Later in the summer, the turtlehead plants were inspected for eggs, although none were observed in 2001. The planting areas will be monitored each spring for caterpillar activity. Success of this project depends on the mating success of the adult butterflies.



What's next?

The Department will continue to maintain and monitor the turtlehead planting areas. Additional reintroduction will be planned in the future, if necessary.

What can you do to help?

- Establish butterfly habitat in your own yard or community including turtlehead, (*Chelone glabra*). Be sure to use native plants and not horticultural varieties.
- Learn how to identify butterflies.
- Join a local butterfly club.

For more information about restoration efforts of the Baltimore Checkerspot in Howard County, contact Sue Muller at 410-313-4697 or smuller@co.ho.md.us.

Howard County
Department of Recreation & Parks
presents the

Environmental Education Series

The goal of the Department of Recreation and Parks is to preserve a balance of ecological, natural and environmental values in Open Space land throughout the County. We strive to manage these areas in a way that will preserve their ecological integrity while making them available to the public for passive recreational use.

A key element in our management plan is public awareness and education. This brochure is one of a series of publications designed to educate the public on matters related to the conservation and preservation of our environment.

To help accomplish this goal, our staff is available to speak with various civic and community organizations and to assist with the planning and implementation of projects such as habitat enhancement, reforestation, stream walks, water quality monitoring, etc. It is our firm belief that only by working together can we fulfill the moral and civic responsibility with which we have all been charged . . . the stewardship of the land. For additional information, or to become involved in our program, please call 410-313-4700.

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Habitat Restoration for the



Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly



**Howard County
Department of
Recreation & Parks**
