

PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: Visit the zoo's blog for more photos: <http://bit.ly/butterflymountain>

Rare Oregon silverspot butterfly caterpillars reintroduced to Saddle Mountain

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is part of a team that released 500 Oregon silverspot butterfly caterpillars on the slopes of Saddle Mountain located in Oregon. More than 200 of the released caterpillars were raised this summer at the zoo's butterfly conservation lab.

The reintroduction is part of a collaborative, ongoing effort to stabilize the declining population of the Oregon silverspot butterfly. Other team members joining the caterpillar release were Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Zoo.

The caterpillars began their journey to the mountain as part of the imperiled species programs at Woodland Park Zoo and Oregon Zoo. Each year, a small number of female Oregon silverspot butterflies are collected from wild populations and brought to zoo conservation labs to lay eggs. The hatched larvae spend the winter asleep in the lab. In the early summer they are woken up and fed early blue violet leaves, which have been raised by the zoo's horticulture department. Once the larvae have reached a certain size they are transported to Oregon where they are released into the wild.

The Oregon silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria zerene hippolyta*) was federally listed as threatened in 1980, and population numbers have declined continuously over the last three decades. It once lived in Washington but has since been extirpated from the state, and today, just four isolated populations remain: three in Oregon and one in California.

To survive, the Oregon silverspot butterfly needs early blue violets, a low-growing native wildflower. Silverspots lay their eggs near violet plants, and growing caterpillars rely on the violets as their sole source of food as they mature into adult butterflies. But now early blue violets are disappearing from their native coastal landscapes where they are being choked out by invasive weeds—such as scotch broom—and forest succession. Saddle Mountain was chosen as the reintroduction site for these caterpillars because the delicate violets bloom in abundance there.

"Saddle Mountain is like the hot real estate market in Seattle—it's prime land for Oregon silverspots. We have carefully nurtured these fragile caterpillars in our lab, and our hope is that they will thrive, successfully reproduce and become the start of a robust butterfly population at this new release site," said Erin Sullivan, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo who oversees the silverspot recovery project at the zoo.

Funding for the reintroduction project was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and Woodland Park Zoo.

The [butterfly recovery project](#) is a part of Woodland Park Zoo's [Living Northwest](#) conservation programs that focus on native species restoration, habitat protection, wildlife education and human-wildlife conflict mitigation across the Pacific Northwest. In 2012, Woodland Park Zoo and Oregon Zoo earned the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' Significant Achievement Award for the Oregon Silverspot Captive Rearing Program.

Founded in 1899, Woodland Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and certified by the rigorous American Humane Conservation program. The Humane Certified™ seal of approval is another important validation of the zoo's long-standing tradition of meeting the highest standards in animal welfare. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats through more than 30 field projects in the Pacific Northwest and



around the world. Each year, the zoo engages more than a million visitors of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and walks of life in extraordinary experiences with animals, inspiring them to make conservation a priority in their lives and a difference in our planet's future ecological health and sustainability. Visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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