

## ***South Puget Sound Program Highlights April - June 2010***

*The Nature Conservancy is committed to conservation within the South Sound region and the Willamette Valley /Puget Trough/Georgia Basin ecoregion. The Conservancy will continue to perform outstanding stewardship, protect key conservation parcels and promote a conservation community of cooperative partners.*

### **Taylor's Checkerspot Release**

Although The Nature Conservancy does not play a central role in raising and releasing Taylor's checkerspot butterflies, we would like to highlight the success of our partners in this effort. The WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife has been working with the Oregon Zoo to raise checkerspots since 2004. These butterflies have been released in their larval stage at a state wildlife area in the South Sound for four years. This year was notable in both the length of the flight season and the number of adult butterflies observed; it was also the first year that adult butterflies were released. In addition, mating and oviposition were observed at the site, confirming reproduction by the released animals. These and other observations suggest that we may be well on our way to reestablishing a lost population of one of the rarest species in Washington. Similar results were attained at a new release site on Fort Lewis this year. Congratulations to WDFW, Oregon Zoo and their primary funders, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Dept. of Defense.



*Mary Linders, lead biologist on the checker-spot project releases adult Taylor's checkerspots at a state wildlife area.*

This success illustrates the effectiveness of multi-partner collaborations. Additionally, it shows that the long-term restoration of our prairies is improving habitat sufficiently to set the stage for reintroductions. We anticipate similar successes will continue in the South Sound over the next few years.

### **Townsend's Big-Eared Bats Found Along Black River**

Upon investigation of a maintenance repair at our Mima Creek Preserve, project biologist Sanders Freed noticed large amounts of guano in an outbuilding. Further exploration revealed the presence of state candidate species and federal species of concern Townsend's big-eared bats. The rare bat has been reduced to several known maternity colonies in the South Sound, and bat ecologists have been on the lookout for a Capitol Forest colony. The finding suggests a maternity colony in the area, and to that end, the bat was fitted with a transmitter. A research partner with WDFW and Cascadia Research Collective, Greg Falxa, provided his expertise in the investigation. During the 14 day transmitter period, several other day roosts were located in the area, and multiple other Townsend's bats. With this new information, further monitoring of the area is underway and strategies for conservation are being detailed.



*A Townsend's big-eared bat hanging in an outbuilding at Mima Creek Preserve. Look at those big ears!!*

## Prairie Conservation

**Plant and Seed Production** – The native prairie plant and seed needs of the Conservancy and our partners continues to grow. This year nearly a half million plugs and several hundred pounds of seeds will be produced and used to restore South Sound prairies. This is possible due to partnerships with Evergreen State College, WA Dept. of Corrections, WA Dept. of Natural Resources, Joint Base: Lewis-McChord and several private contractors. The work is coordinated through Shotwell's Landing Nursery which grows significant amounts of plant material itself, especially many locally rare plant species. We are looking forward to planting all those plugs this fall, a backbreaking job that will take several weeks. Would anyone like to help with the planting? Just give us a call.



*Anita Goodrich next to a seed production row of Clarkia at DNR's Webster Nursery.*

## Cooperative Conservation

**ACUB Add-on** – We reported last quarter on the continuing support of the Dept. of Defense for the South Sound Army Compatible Use Buffer Program. We are pleased to report that the program received an additional \$170,000 during this quarter. This 'Plus-Up' contribution illustrates the importance of this program for the Dept of Defense and Joint Base: Lewis-McChord. The South Sound Program continues to innovate under the ACUB program by concentrating on stewardship and restoration actions leading to recovery of four candidate species. The program recently underwent its biennial review. The Dept. of Defense was pleased with the work accomplished and the suggested future directions. The ACUB cooperators will decide together where these new funds will be used. They are a welcome addition and another reminder of the value the work the Conservancy and its partners are accomplishing.

## Joint Base: Lewis-McChord Conservation

**Reed Canarygrass Control** - Muck Creek is an important drainage in the Nisqually watershed. Not only does it provide spawning habitat for salmon and cutthroat trout, it also supports large wetland complexes, as well as riparian oak and prairie. Wet prairie supports nectar later into the season, and can be a critical resource for butterflies and other pollinators. As is typical in many Pacific Northwest streams, reed canarygrass is a key threat. By working with the Nisqually Tribe, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord we have developed a restoration and canarygrass control trial that evaluates integrated strategies including fire, mechanical and chemical methods. This project is innovative and builds on current work at Shotwell's Landing and Mima Creek preserves. It is also expected to inform strategies for Oregon spotted frog habitat enhancement.



*Mechanical control of reed canarygrass is part of the treatments used at Muck Creek.*