

# The Baltimore Checkerspot Restoration Project of Maryland - Saving Maryland's State Butterfly -

## **Facts about Maryland's Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly** *Euphydryas phaeton*

Named official Maryland state insect in 1973

Once common within its wet meadow habitat, mainly in the Piedmont and west

Rapidly declining since the early 1990's in Maryland and throughout the Mid-Atlantic.

Formerly recorded in 15 Maryland counties, now down to five.

Although not officially endangered, placed on Maryland's "watch list" in 2001 (category S-3)

Theories explaining the species' regional decline:

- Habitat loss and degradation due to development and crop agriculture
- Over-consumption of the host plant, White Turtlehead, and destruction of young larval concentrations on it by an exploding white-tailed deer population. The plant is relished by browsing deer herds.
- Drift from insecticide applications to agricultural crops
- Habitat impairment from herbicide treatments to control woody plants along stretches of utility line rights-of-way
- Large-scale insecticide applications and even introduced parasites aimed at controlling gypsy moths but unfortunately having detrimental effects on struggling non-pest species too.
- Habitat change and degradation due to global warming

One brood (generation) per year, which flies only between early June and mid-July.

Habitat: wet meadow with plentiful White Turtlehead, the required larval food

Habitat kept open and sunny, usually by grazing livestock; or very limited mowing, such as on a power line right-of-way; or environmentally, such as within a naturally open bog

For long-term survival, requires a patchwork of suitable sites, each located no farther than a quarter-mile from the next

Major conservation projects underway around the state:

- Developer of a Clarksburg (Montgomery County), MD site to cede the small wetland and a band of surrounding slope to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, also to help fund a deer-exclusion fence
- Captive rearing efforts for restoring depleted colonies and creating new ones ongoing at Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, Carroll County Outdoor School and at other Maryland locations
- Search by landowners for possible colonies within Montgomery County, Maryland's "Agricultural Reserve," a large local consortium of property-owners in that county's western rolling-country rural segment.

Above: Underside of the Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly  
Below: Upperside of the Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly

Photos by \*\*\*\*\*

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