

# ACTION PROJECTS

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Butterflies are critical components of functioning ecosystems due to their key roles as pollinators and as indicators of ecosystem health. Butterflies are also beloved by the public, which is largely unaware that many species are threatened or endangered. The National Wildlife Federation has joined the American Zoo and Aquarium Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a multi-year Butterfly Conservation Initiative, aiming to enhance recovery of imperiled butterfly populations in North America and raise public awareness about the ecological role of butterflies and the need to preserve them and their habitats.

NWF has many programs that focus on butterflies and provide opportunities to help conserve them, including the *Keep the Wild Alive* campaign, Backyard Wildlife Habitat and Schoolyard Habitats. Drawing on the conservation and education experience of these different programs, NWF would like to provide several model projects that can be easily carried out with or without our assistance.

The main objectives of these projects are: 1) to enhance students' knowledge of butterfly ecology and conservation through hands-on, interactive learning experiences; 2) to raise public awareness of the threats to butterflies and the need to conserve them; and 3) to give students opportunities to contribute to imperiled butterfly protection and habitat restoration.

## **Project I: Create a Schoolyard Butterfly Habitat**

*Suggested Age Group: K-8*

Educators and students can work together to create a butterfly habitat on school, facility or community grounds. By planting the appropriate native host and nectar plants and providing water sources and other habitat features, you can turn your school grounds into a National Wildlife Federation certified Schoolyard Habitats site — it's easy and fun! Schoolyard Habitats projects provide unique, hands-on, outdoor learning opportunities that cannot be duplicated in the traditional classroom setting and become an important part of your local ecosystem. Your new site will provide outdoor learning opportunities that are interdisciplinary, standards-based, and inexpensive — as well as beneficial to butterflies and other local wildlife. NWF's Schoolyard Habitats program can provide resources, training and curriculum support to participating schools, institutions and community groups. Visit [www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats](http://www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats) for more information.

## ACTION PROJECTS CONTINUED

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### **Project 2: Growing and Transplanting Host Plants**

*Suggested Age Group: K-8*

Since 1999, NWF's *Keep the Wild Alive* campaign has been working with grade school students in Concord, New Hampshire to help the endangered Karner blue butterfly. Working with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG), students grow wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*), the host plant of the endangered Karner blue butterfly, in their classrooms during the winter and then transplant the seedlings to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) conservation land during spring. This is an especially effective tool in teaching the close relationship between plants and animals and transferring the knowledge gained to a natural, habitat-wide context. This creative project can be replicated in many areas where imperiled butterflies are found, as long as the project is implemented in partnership with the appropriate national, state or local partner charged with conserving threatened and endangered species. In fact, AZA member Roger Williams Park Zoo began working with NWF, NHFG, USFWS and other partners on the New Hampshire project in 2002. NWF can provide contact information for local resource agencies and educational resources to interested classrooms. Contact: (202) 797-6892 or [wildalive@nwf.org](mailto:wildalive@nwf.org) for additional information. AZA can provide contact information for accredited zoos and aquariums working with butterflies and host plant conservation. Contact: (301) 562-0777 for additional details.

### **Project 3: Restoration of Butterfly Habitat**

*Suggested Age Group: Middle and High School*

Classrooms and youth service programs can participate in a restoration event hosted by refuges, land trusts, or other organizations overseeing imperiled butterfly recovery, including many AZA institutions. Many endangered butterfly habitats managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service and other resource agencies need help implementing habitat management plans. For butterflies, often the most effective habitat restoration method is the most simple: removal of invasive exotic plants. This activity does not require much expertise and is suitable for almost all ages. It also teaches a valuable lesson on the benefits of native species versus invasive exotics and can advance students' understanding of the intimate relationship between butterflies and plants. NWF's *Keep the Wild Alive* campaign and AZA can help participants identify a local partner to help design a restoration project and host the event, as well as assist educators in preparing students before they participate in the event. Contact: (202) 797-6892 or [wildalive@nwf.org](mailto:wildalive@nwf.org) for additional information from NWF or (301)562-0777 for information from AZA.