



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Creating Successful Butterfly Education and Outreach Programs

10 March 2005

Hosted by the Kansas City Zoo

Workshop Report

Introduction

Butterfly exhibits, gardens, and conservation projects are of widespread interest among American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA)-accredited zoos and aquariums. This interest is evident by the facts that almost 25% of the AZA membership has joined the Butterfly Conservation Initiative (BFCI) within the past three years in order to participate in North American butterfly conservation and that many other AZA institutions also offer butterfly gardens and exhibits. Local butterfly conservation is seen by many AZA institutions as an opportunity to make significant contributions to conservation in their own backyards and is particularly appealing to smaller institutions that leverage their resources through partnerships to further magnify their contributions. AZA institutions of all sizes highlight their butterfly efforts as evidence of their leadership in community conservation and to facilitate partnerships with government agencies and environmental organizations.

The majority of AZA zoos' and aquariums' biggest contribution to butterfly conservation is through education and outreach. In a Fall 2004 survey of BFCI members, 38 out of 39 respondents had ongoing butterfly conservation education projects. A large majority of respondents said they would like more butterfly educational materials to be made available. These responses illustrate AZA institutions' commitment to butterfly education. The Kansas City session was designed to support educators by stimulating discussion and providing tools and ideas that can be used to improve butterfly education efforts at all institutions.

Session Goals

The goals of the session were to: 1) encourage zoos and aquariums to engage in butterfly

conservation outreach activities by highlighting some of the unique outreach programs in which zoos and aquariums participate, or with which they could partner in the future; 2) expose educators to various institutions' butterfly education activities as a source of new ideas and inspiration for their own education programs; and 3) provide an opportunity for informal networking and enthusiasm building among butterfly educators, alongside more formal information and resource sharing.

Session Format

The session began with butterfly conservation outreach presentations by Dr. Chip Taylor from Monarch Watch, David Walker from the Oklahoma City Zoo & Botanical Garden, and Dr. Jaret Daniels from the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity, followed by a presentation on butterfly education by Donna Dupske from The Butterfly House.

An Activity Swap followed the presentations, in which participants shared butterfly education materials and identified activities they were interested in incorporating into their existing education programs. BFCI members David Walker from the Oklahoma City Zoo & Botanical Garden, Donna Dupske from The Butterfly House, Shelly Grow from the Butterfly Conservation Initiative, and Amy Bodwell from the Brookfield Zoo shared activities with the group, as did Dr. Chip Taylor from Monarch Watch, and Gail Manning from the Texas Discovery Gardens. After people presented their activities, session participants met with the educators to ask follow-up questions, look more closely at the materials and handouts, and discuss other ideas.

Presentation Summaries

(Presentations are included in this report)

Dr. Taylor discussed the monarch migration and the threats facing the phenomenon, focusing specifically on the lack of available milkweed and other butterfly-friendly plants along the migratory route and in the monarchs' principal natal grounds in the Midwest. To combat this problem, Dr. Taylor unveiled the creation of certifiable Monarch Waystations, a program that will encourage people to plant the most widely used milkweeds and other plants that will support the adult population as they migrate.

The Oklahoma State Department of Wildlife Conservation has an office at the Oklahoma City Zoo, providing a unique opportunity for partnerships and outreach. David Walker from the Oklahoma City Zoo discussed various zoo-government partnerships that are being pursued both on- and off-grounds. These programs include surveys, habitat restoration, butterfly counts, native gardening and gardening certification, and a BioBlitz.

Dr. Jaret Daniels from the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity at the University of Florida discussed the development of the Florida citizen-scientist butterfly monitoring network. Statewide monitoring networks are one way to track the populations of non-listed butterflies, to raise public awareness, and to engage the public in butterfly conservation. Dr. Daniels identified the project's goals, the process being used to develop the network, and presented the final vision of how the monitoring network would function and grow over time.

To inspire conservation action, children must first understand basic butterfly biology. Donna Dupske from The Butterfly House in Missouri discussed methods for teaching butterfly biology and behavior to young children. See her presentation and handouts (both attached to this report) for ideas that can be used at any institution.

Conclusions

AZA zoos and aquariums are making significant contributions to butterfly conservation through outreach and education programs but would like more materials supporting their efforts. This session brought together butterfly conservation outreach and education experts from throughout the country to discuss ways that zoos and aquariums can engage in outreach and improve

their butterfly education programs. We hope that the information discussed will be of use to other educators.

This report includes copies of each presentation made at the session and some of the materials and activities shared. These activities were shared with the hopes that others will use them. Contact the BFCI or the educator that supplied the activity if you have any questions. Also, be courteous and provide appropriate credit when possible.

Acknowledgements

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The BFCI is a coalition of 53 American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA)-accredited zoos and aquariums and six partner organizations including the AZA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Defense, National Wildlife Federation, the Xerces Society, and the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity. To learn more about the BFCI, visit <http://www.aza.org/ConScience/bfci>.