

First AZA Butterfly Course a Success

Thirty students from twelve US states, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, and Israel gathered in April for the first offering of the AZA Board of Regents' *Techniques for Butterfly Conservation and Management* course. Hosted by the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera & Biodiversity at U-FL in Gainesville, the course was packed with lectures, lab activities, group exercises, and networking opportunities. Students and instructors put in long hours, but came away energized about their ongoing butterfly work and future possibilities. We plan to hold the course again in Gainesville in 2008, and are developing plans for a field-based course to be held in Colorado in summer 2007. Special thanks to our 30 pioneering students for making the course a success! For more on AZA Regents training programs contact AZATraining@aza.org or call 301-562-0777.

Chicago Zoological Society Renovates Seasonal Exhibit

By: Amy Bodwell, Local Conservation Initiatives Coordinator

In 2001, the Chicago Zoological Society, which manages Brookfield Zoo, opened "*Butterflies! Wings of Wonder.*" Despite limited staff experience, the temporary exhibit exceeded expectations and after five years the Society decided to renovate the popular revenue-generating exhibit.

Pavers and a meandering waterfall replaced crushed-limestone pathways and a small water feature. A rock water fountain replaced a small stream and dying trees were replaced with native shrubs and new plants. A new net covers the exhibit, a sound system was added, and a new window in the front vestibule looks into the pupa room. The Society's Women's Board planted a pollinator garden outside the exhibit to soften the view of the tent and provide food for native and collection animals.

Most importantly, the new pupae room was completed. The gleaming room has a sink, refrigerator, humidifier, ceiling vent, shelves, and enough space to store all supplies year-round. Pupal emergent rates increased from 85%-88% in 2005 to 95.2% in the exhibit's first month in 2006. What a difference a solid room makes!

On 14 June, David Mizejewski, National Wildlife Federation's *Backyard Wildlife Habitat* program manager, hosted Animal Planet's *Backyard Habitat* (<http://animal.discovery.com>) at the Zoo. The episode featured commas and question marks that, thanks to near-perfect conditions, flashed their identifying marks on cue and quietly sat on fruit. We don't know when the show airs but look forward to seeing our stars on TV.

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo Monitors Butterflies

By: Mary McCarthy, Herps and Aquatics Keeper

The Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network is a fantastic conservation program that easily attracts enthusiastic volunteers, due to its local focus and butterflies' public appeal.

Near-constant winds from cyclones in the Gulf of Mexico prohibited us from starting a transect in 2005, but this year has been far more productive. Advertising to zoo staff and docents, and an email to local native plant and *Lepidoptera* societies yielded several volunteers. Training consisted of a discussion about the behaviors that distinguish butterflies (i.e., monarchs glide whereas gulf fritillaries appear more frantic; blues fly low and sit with their wings shut) and a slideshow highlighting the finer points differentiating species. Practice walks with FBMN coordinator Akers Pence reinforced what we learned and reassured us that identifying butterflies on the fly wasn't as daunting as it first appeared.

Given the lack of "wild" places in and around the zoo, I was worried that we wouldn't find many species. However, informal walk-throughs with volunteers and Akers yielded *fifteen* butterfly species! Akers pointed out that manicured lawns and gardens are increasingly the dominant habitat and that it's important to know which species can be supported.

We now have transects along the zoo's service road and a creek by the parking lot. FBMN provides identification guides and nets, so we didn't make any financial investment in the program. Transects are walked monthly by two people, so a successful network requires just a few volunteers willing to donate a morning or afternoon every few weeks.

Information gained from this statewide effort is invaluable, as is the enjoyment of participating. I know of no other program as fun as it is valuable, and I encourage everyone to join (www.flbutterflies.net)!

Birmingham Zoo Breaks Attendance Record!

In May, the Birmingham Zoo's seasonal native butterfly exhibit, *Butterfly Encounter*, broke monthly attendance records with more than 30,500 visitors. The Zoo is positioned to beat last year's overall attendance; the exhibit drew 79,896 visitors over three months in 2005. The exhibit has a visitor capture rate averaging between 55-60% of total Zoo attendance and does not charge a separate entry fee. The exhibit opened April 15 and will run through Labor Day.



FBMN training at Lowry Park Zoo.

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(** Founding member; * Contributor)

** Abilene Zoo
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** Binder Park Zoo
Birmingham Zoo
* Brandywine Zoo
* Brevard Zoo
Brookfield Zoo
** Bronx Zoo/WCS
The Butterfly House
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** Friends of the WNC Nature Center
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Photo: Brookfield Zoo. Credit Amy Bodwell

** Henry Vilas Zoo
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Visit these Seasonal Exhibits!

Brevard Zoo's butterfly exhibit, featuring swallowtails, runs June 16 until July 30.

Brookfield Zoo's seasonal butterfly exhibit runs May 27 – September 17.

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo's "Butterfly Magic" exhibit runs May 19 through Labor Day.

Western North Carolina Nature Center's temporary exhibit kicks off with Nectar Collector Day on July 1 and runs until September 4.

Announce your butterfly efforts and activities in *BFCI News* by contacting Shelly Grow, BFCI Program Coordinator at:
sgrow@aza.org or 301-562-0777 x263. To learn more about the BFCI, please visit our Web site (www.butterflyrecovery.org).

