



Butterfly Habitat at *the Wilds*
June 2004

Dr. Nicole Cavender, *the Wilds*
Director, Restoration Ecology

The butterfly habitat at the Wilds is progressing and we're having fun doing it. The 6-acre area that was planted in the fall of 2004 has germinated and has grown very green. Many of the seedlings are visible but as expected, most are small and are putting much of their energies into establishing healthy root systems. Black-eyed susans are beginning to flower and we also expect bidens to bloom this season. The prairie seedlings are contending with weeds such as field mustards, foxtail, birdsfoot trefoil, curly dock, and teasel. We are mowing high or hand weeding as necessary. Birdsfoot trefoil is not easily managed, but because it is a short growing plant, the prairie plants should be able to withstand the competition as they get taller. Later this summer, we plan to establish survey plots in order to monitor the changes in vegetation diversity and abundance.

The other four-acre area adjacent to the 6 acres had been placed in a cover crop of winter rye during the winter. The rye was killed with glyphosate herbicide early in the spring followed by mowing. The area was then planted using a seed drill on June 2nd. There was a good rainfall the day after planting. The customized seed mix purchased from Ohio Prairie Nursery contained butterflyweed, New-England aster, partridge pea, lanced-leafed coreopsis, purple coneflower, rattlesnake master, ox-eye sunflower, prairie bushclover, great blue lobelia, wild bergamot, foxglove beardtongue, Virginia mountain mint, black-eyed susan, sweet black-eyed susan, stiff goldenrod, side-oats grama, Canada wild rye, little bluestem, and prairie dropseed. Seeds of similar species that were hand picked the previous year or donated from various sources (i.e. garden clubs, Zoo partners) were seeded by hand in a small portion of the area. So far there is some evidence of germination.

In order to keep track of the butterfly species that are using the habitat area, we have set up a long-term loop transect which we survey weekly. I attended the Ohio Statewide Butterfly Monitoring Workshop in March, which was sponsored by The Ohio Lepidopterists, Ohio Division of Wildlife, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Ohio Biological Survey. We set up the transect at the habitat according to their instruction. We began the monitoring process on May 14th. So far, in order of abundance, we have seen cabbage white, little wood satyr, european skipper, least skipper, clouded sulphur, summer azure, eastern-tailed blue, eastern tiger swallowtail, silver-spotted skipper, red admiral, spicebush swallowtail, viceroy, and eastern comma. The hope is that we will see increases in species and numbers as the habitat matures.

We plan to make further enhancements to the habitat by hand planting and continuing seeding projects. Toledo Zoo volunteers have donated some seed that will be planting later this fall. We encourage volunteers and BFCI partners to also collect and send seed for the project.