



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

**TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW Time (7:05)**

**PALOS VERDES BLUE BUTTERFLY (HOST – SARAH LEON WITH LUETENANT COLONEL  
JON RAMER FROM THE DEFENSE FUEL SUPPORT POINT IN SAND PEDRO, CA.)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by FWS Endangered Species Program

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

(Music plays.)

It's an incredible story about second chances. For years, the Palos Verdes blue butterfly was thought to be extinct, until a small population of these beautiful butterflies was discovered on the Defense Fuel Support Point in San Pedro, California. Now, with this site being one of the last remaining habitats for this incredibly rare butterfly, the Department of Defense has stepped up to make sure that this is a species we don't lose again.

MS. LEON: Hello there. This is Sarah Leon for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and I'm on the phone today with Lieutenant Colonel Ramer from the Defense Fuel Support Point.

Hi Colonel Ramer, how are you today?

COLONEL RAMER: Very good, thank you.

MS. LEON: So we know about this really interesting story about the Palos Verdes blue butterfly. And I hear that you're playing an active role in recovering this species. Would you care to talk about some of the things you're doing to aid in the recovery of this beautiful butterfly?

COLONEL RAMER: Sure. When it was discovered that this is the only known habitat for, what was a thought to be extinct butterfly, the Department of Defense immediately put all sorts of funding to it. They funded the recovery efforts, gave some land off of the facility here to the Conservancy people, gave them a trailer, gave them funding to raise plants and to do a captive breeding program. We've rerouted services, we've changed our mowing habits so we don't do any mowing during the flight season or breeding season. We've propagated into four other locations, as I understand now, all from plant species that are grown right here in the nursery on the base, which the Department of Defense funds.

We actually had a couple of bee hives here on the facility. Domesticated bee hives. We have lots of wild bees because the facility is about 350 acres of land and most of our fuel tanks are underground, so the land above ground is pretty much natural. So there's lots of bee hives and such in trees and rock piles and things. But we had two domesticated bee hives in what's called a super—a big, white box with frames of honeycomb inside it.

One of those bee hives was actually at the bottom of the hill that is the prime butterfly habitat. And at one of our meetings with the Conservancy people, somebody mentioned that the butterflies nectar off of deerweed almost exclusively. So I was looking at the deerweed one day and noticed there are hundreds of bees over one plant and only one butterfly. And with the wild population of about 250, and hundreds and hundreds of plants all over, it seemed to me that if bees make honey out of nectar and the bees are nectaring off of the deerweed plant then the honey they make should be concentrated butterfly food.

So, I approached Jana Johnson and said: "Would you like some honey that I think is deerweed honey?" And she kind of got a funny look and said: "Hey, you know that might be a good idea." So I gave her a pint of it and apparently she fed it to a control group one year, and that control group lived far longer than they were when they were feeding them fruit punch Gatorade®.

And so the females were alive longer and laying more eggs. Jana came back and said: "Can I have some more honey for next year because we're going to feed them this." I said: "how much would you like?" And she said: "How about a gallon?" And I went: "Oh, okay!" I didn't have enough bee hives to give her that much honey, so myself and one other employee from DESC America's West, we actually went out to some of those bee hives that were in trees and pipes and concrete piles, and we extracted them. We put them in supers, and now we have six bee hives scattered across the facility where deerweed grows. And we harvest the honey and give two gallons every year to the Conservancy people.

Since we started doing that, their captive breeding population went from about 250 to I think they had like 6,000 last year. And they've been releasing hundreds in different locations. So, the Conservancy people all kind of gave us a huge pat on the back saying: "We think it's your honey that played a huge role in dramatic explosion of the population numbers, allowing us to release into the wild and see these colonies." So it's all because of bees.

MS. LEON: Alright, and natural resource conservation may not seem like something the military would be involved in. And I feel pretty safe saying that when people hear Department of Defense, they're probably thinking about aircrafts, guns and missiles—not bees and butterflies. Can you tell our listeners why you've decided to play such an active role in recovery?

COLONEL RAMER: Well, first off, the Department of Defense is mandated just like every other federal organization to comply with federal laws. One of the federal laws is the Endangered Species Act, which means that anytime you have an endangered species on federal land, the government will do anything it can to help propagate the species and help recover it.

But, second off, it's kind of a moral imperative. The Department of Defense isn't just about defense against enemies. It could be a defense against somebody who did something unknowingly and now we want to fix it. It's just a morally right thing to do. So we've done everything we could to help the species come back from the brink. We're very happy about that.

MS. LEON: Can you tell us how it feels knowing that you are actually helping to move the needle towards recovery—that you're actually helping this species recover?

COLONEL RAMER: It's nothing but a good feeling. You know there are so many things that are done wrong in the world today, and when you do something like this and it's done right and it's a good thing, well it's just a good feeling. I can't describe it any other way other than that.

I look at pictures of the butterflies and we have an annual meeting every year where we talk about what the conservancy people need and what we as the Department of Defense need for operating the facility. And usually anything that they require, I make it happen.

I had funding one year and I purchased a greenhouse so they could grow host plants during that year. And as it turns out, the next year after we did this purchase with extra funding for the greenhouse, they had a snail attack. The snails ate the entire stock of deerweed plants. They went into the greenhouse, and because it was a greenhouse,

they were able to very quickly grow a new stock and it basically saved the entire next year's population.

So when we do these kinds of things, it just feels good. We do everything we can to make sure that nature wins out over what's been done to it.

MS. LEON: This whole story is actually just amazing—how we thought this butterfly was gone forever and now it's back and we've been given this second chance to help it recover. I know a lot of people thank you so much for playing an active role and everything that you are doing to help recovery efforts.

COLONEL RAMER: My pleasure. As an Air Force guy, it's nice to see little blue flying things on my base.

MS. LEON: For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Sarah Leon. Thanks for listening.