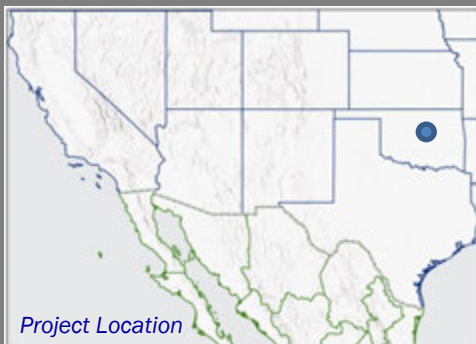


RESTORATION

The Tribal Alliance For Pollinators: Restoring Pollinator Habitat on Tribal Lands in Oklahoma



As important pollinator habitat in Oklahoma has become increasingly degraded and fragmented, several Tribal nations have initiated habitat restoration efforts. Oklahoma is home to 39 Tribal Nations who have a unique capacity to apply traditional ecological knowledge to issues such as pollinator habitat degradation. Because the tools and resources necessary for pollinator habitat restoration may not be widely accessible, Native American-led land restoration and maintenance on Tribal lands can be difficult. Therefore, The Tribal Alliance for Pollinators (TAP), the only Tribal-led pollinator initiative in the US., collaborates with Tribes across Oklahoma and the central United States to provide training and equipment to overcome barriers to pollinator conservation.



Volunteers Collecting Seeds of Pollinator Plants for the TAP's Seed Bank

KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

When conservation efforts are confined within specific political boundaries, or collaboration is limited by political differences, large areas of valuable habitat are overlooked. This causes conservation efforts to be unevenly distributed throughout the area of concern, resulting in an overall lack of success. TAP helps share knowledge, equipment and seeds inter-tribally. Specific farming equipment, native seeds, training, and other educational resources may not be widely accessible, especially in rural areas. Without more regular access to these resources, it is difficult for groups to initiate and maintain habitat restoration initiatives. The conservation of ecologically and culturally important pollinators will not succeed without the restoration of the native habitats they depend on for food and shelter.

PROJECT GOALS

- Forge partnerships that support the dissemination of seeds, equipment, and ecological knowledge among Tribal nations
- Provide access to the resources necessary for the restoration and maintenance of pollinator habitat on Tribal lands
- Restore pollinator habitat through the planting and maintenance of important native plants

MILKWEED IS FOOD

Monarch larvae aren't the only consumers of milkweed. Indigenous cultures have harvested it as a food crop responsibly for generations and continue to do so to this day.



Monarch Butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) at the Euchee Butterfly Farm

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Partners in Change: In 2021, representatives from 62 Tribes across the US participated in TAP training events, workshops, conferences, and webinars that allowed members to share traditional ecological knowledge, histories and perspectives unique to their cultures.

Lending a Helping Hand: TAP developed a lending library that gives members access to a wide range of tools and resources including but not limited to weed-eaters, clippers, shovels, mowers, books and field guides.

Sowing Seeds for an Accessible Future: TAP collected, identified, processed, cataloged, and stored over 9.2 billion seeds belonging to over 150 native plant species and made them available to TAP members for free.

Taking Action: In 2016, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation planted 2,500 milkweeds plants at the Citizen Potawatomi Eagle Aviary and pledged to plant an additional 2,500 the following year. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation was just one of seven Tribes that each pledged to plant 50 acres of milkweed over a two-year period.

Collaborators

- The Euchee Butterfly Farm
- The Learning Center at Euchee Butterfly Farm: Natives Raising Natives
- Tribal Environmental Action for Monarchs (TEAM)

CCAST Author: Maddison Elliott, University of Ohio, November 2022.

Photos courtesy of Jane Breckinridge, TAP
For more information on CCAST, contact
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Visit CCAST:



LESSONS LEARNED

Personal experiences with the endangerment of indigenous traditions, languages, and culture allowed TAP's members to empathize with threatened pollinators, resulting in a unique conservation perspective.

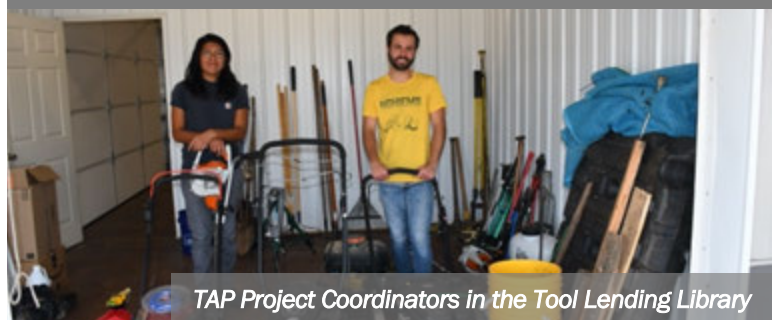
The provision of resources such as specialized equipment, educational materials, and seeds not only assisted in Native land restoration, but also developed the capacity for future restoration and sustainable economic development.

Allowing seeds to take root in a controlled environment like a hoop house and then planting the burgeoning plant plug in the ground was a more successful planting method than planting seeds directly in the ground. The planting of seed plugs was labor intensive and required the hands-on efforts of many volunteers. Flexibility and patience were key to overcoming the volunteer capacity obstacles set forth by the novel coronavirus.

NEXT STEPS

- Maintain restored areas to ensure food and shelter are regularly available for pollinators
- Find new collection sites and recruit new seed collection volunteers to expand the biodiversity of the seed bank
- Develop a secure long-term plan to protect seed equipment
- Provide travel scholarships to increase access to TAP trainings
- Process, catalog and store seeds collected in the previous year

For more information on this project, contact Jane Breckinridge: jbreckinridge@hotmail.com



TAP Project Coordinators in the Tool Lending Library