

Frosted Elfin Conservation (Maryland DNR)

In Maryland, State Wildlife Grant funds were used to conduct several inventory, monitoring, and habitat management activities for the frosted elfin (*Callophrys irus*), a globally rare and state endangered butterfly. One of the major threats to the species is loss of larval host plants (wild indigo [*Lupinus perennis*] and wild lupine [*Baptisia tinctoria*]) due to deer browsing and disruption of natural disturbance regimes, especially fire suppression. To reduce deer browsing at one site that supports one of the state's two largest frosted elfin populations, electric deer fencing was maintained around a large portion of the butterfly's habitat. The enclosure now supports robust populations of planted lupine and indigo. In an effort to restore fire as a natural disturbance agent at the site, the Maryland DNR worked with Maryland Forest Service staff to develop a prescribed burn plan for the approximately 600 acre area, and hope to implement the plan in 2017. The Maryland DNR also collaborated with the Salisbury Zoo and Environmental Concerns, Inc., a nonprofit corporation specializing in native plant horticulture and restoration, to devise a strategy to collect local seeds and grow wild indigo and wild lupine for future frosted elfin research and habitat restoration projects.



A frosted elfin. Credit: Tim Wilder