

## Denman Island Butterfly Reserves- Habitat Conservation Work

### [Denman Conservancy Association](#)

[December 2014](#)

To help save the only breeding population of Taylor's checkerspot butterfly in Canada, a 10 ha (24.7 acres) reserve has been set aside in the new Denman Island Provincial Park. The final, marked reserve area includes both wetlands where breeding and raising offspring occur, as well as open, grassy areas where nectaring butterflies forage in May and early June. The reserve is in part of a 1999 clear-cut where many young trees are now growing apace. To maintain open, sunny areas that are necessary for butterfly activities, some of these smaller, regenerating trees need to be removed as soon as possible. BC Parks is funding this activity through a grant from the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) of Environment Canada. The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team is providing technical advice and support through the Invertebrates at Risk Recovery Implementation Group and the Taylor's Checkerspot Community Working Group. The necessary tree cutting will be carried out by local volunteers and a hired professional crew from autumn 2014 to January 2015, before butterflies become active again. Tree removal will be carefully monitored and tracked so that the response of Taylor's checkerspots to this habitat enhancement work can be measured.

A little further south on Denman, the Denman Conservancy's Settlement Lands is also a recovering clear cut. It was on the Settlement Lands that the first known Taylor's Checkerspot on Denman was found in 2005 and a breeding population has existed there until at least 2010. Since then, trees in the Settlement Lands have grown, changing the habitat, and also the numbers of Taylor checkerspots throughout Denman Island have declined, possibly due to poor weather in the breeding season. This is often a problem for many butterfly populations and numbers can fluctuate widely. In recent years, Taylor's checkerspots have not been seen in the Settlement Lands.

Last year, a plan was developed to set aside and manage a portion of the Settlement Lands as a Taylor's checkerspot Reserve. This reserve of just over 3 ha or 7 acres contains two small wetlands where breeding has occurred in the past, as well as potential open sunny habitat for nectaring butterflies. New young trees in these sunny openings also need cutting to enhance and maintain the butterfly habitat. Part of the HSP grant, mentioned above will be used for tree-cutting and the clearing of Scotch broom in the Settlement Lands Taylor's checkerspot reserve between December 2014 and February 2015.