

**Rare butterfly returns to park**  
*The Daily Journal*, San Mateo County  
Staff Report, April 6, 2007

Officials from across the county celebrated the return of the Bay checkerspot butterfly to Edgewood Park in the unincorporated area near San Carlos yesterday.

Hundreds of butterflies were released into the park yesterday as a celebration of a significant breakthrough in understanding how freeway exhaust can harm a species, according to a statement released by Julia Bott, executive director of the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation.

The effort to restore the natural habitat for the butterfly was a slow process that required a bevy of volunteers to rid the park of invasive Italian rye grass and replace it with native plants that feed and shelter the insect. Years later, those involved in the effort are ready to celebrate its success and welcome back the black, white and orange checkered butterfly.

The work done at Edgewood Park around the disappearance — and return — of the checkerspot may help restore similar ecosystems around the world.

Ecologists determined the culprit responsible for the butterflies' disappearance is the automotive catalytic converter designed to reduce air pollution. Rather than converting pollutants from cars into non-reactive, inert nitrogen, catalytic converters produce ammonia molecules which spew from exhaust pipes and drift on the wind to adjacent areas.



*Erik Oeverndiek/Daily Journal*  
*Dr. Stuart Weiss released some Bay checkerspot butterflies in Edgewood Park yesterday as part of a long effort by conservationists to return the threatened species to the area.*

Ammonia acts as a fertilizer, encouraging Italian rye grass, a non-native weed, to grow in thick mats that prevent native plant seeds from germinating. Without sheltering plants and food, particularly the California plantain favored by the caterpillars, the Bay checkerspot butterfly population eventually succumbed.

©2007 Daily Journal - San Mateo County's homepage