

Volunteering with the Cascades Butterfly Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Cascades National Park Service
Complex
Mount Rainier National Park



What does it take to be a Citizen Scientist?

What is the Cascades Butterfly Program?

The Cascades Butterfly Program (CBP) is a citizen science program that monitors butterfly abundances and plant phenology at ten permanent transects located in two national parks and two national forests. Each survey route is surveyed once a week for the duration of the summer season. The data collected from this program will help scientists understand how pollinators in our parks will be influenced by climate change.

Why volunteer?

Many volunteers are excited to enjoy the parks while playing a role in their ongoing protection. It is a chance to learn from a scientist while helping to collect important data.



Figure 1. A volunteer admires a checkerspot.

A day in the life

Every day spent volunteering with the CBP will be perfect! Since butterflies are fair weather flyers, data are only collected on sunny, warm days. A typical day starts by meeting with a park scientist and other volunteers before hitting the trail to hike to the survey location. Once at the survey route, each person is assigned a task such as observer, recorder, or communication specialist. Each survey route is 1 km (0.6 mile) long and will be surveyed for butterflies in one direction, and surveyed for plant phenology coming back (or vice versa). After a hike back to the parking lot, the day is complete!

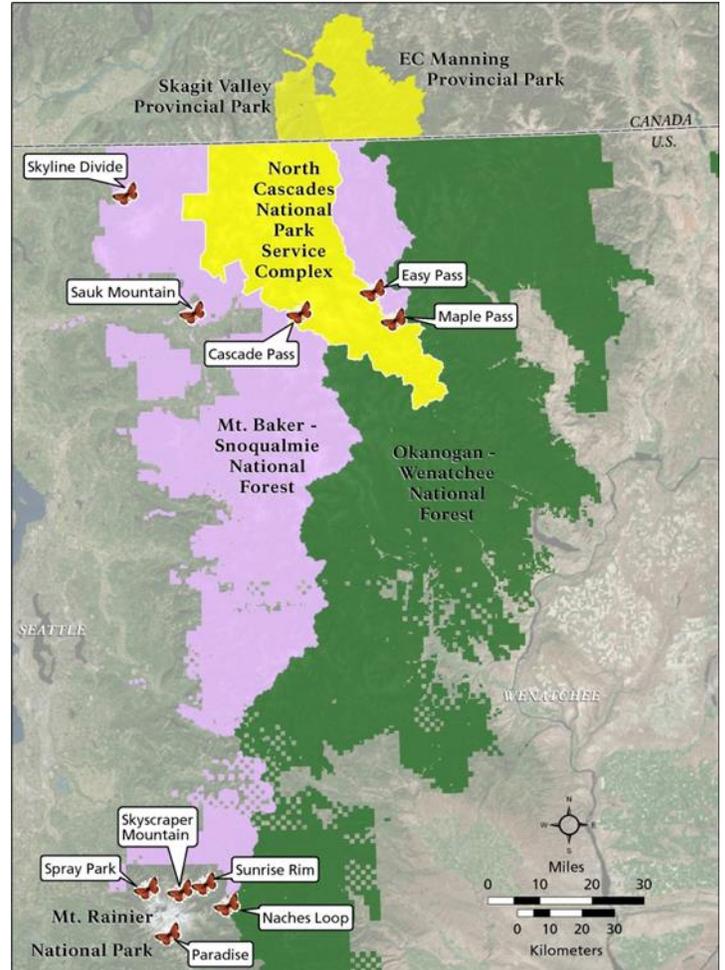


Figure 2. Map of CBP survey routes

Table 1. Summary of surveys completed by year.

Year	# Surveys	# Species	# Butterflies
2011	29	23	819
2012	29	21	480
2013	34	21	1,585
2014	65	30	2,519
2015	100	36	4,431
2016	82	37	3,573

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does each survey take?

An average survey takes about two hours. This can fluctuate depending on how active the butterflies are and the speed in which the plant phenology survey is completed. In addition to the survey time, you will need to allow time for the hike to and from the parking lot to the start of the survey route.

How much time do I need to commit to?

There is no minimum amount of time you have to commit to volunteering. If you are only able to volunteer for one day, you will still be a great benefit to the program. Some volunteers choose to volunteer once a week, and some volunteer only as they are able to.

Do I need to any prior knowledge or experience?

No! All you need is the willingness to learn. You will be accompanied by a scientist who will help and explain how to identify the butterflies and plants.

Is there training?

There will be a one day orientation/training at the beginning of the summer to familiarize you with survey protocol. If you are unable to make this training, do not despair! Training will be provided the first day you volunteer.

How strenuous is the hiking?

The distance and difficulty of the hikes vary greatly among the survey routes, the easiest being about one mile round trip, to the most difficult being approximately 7 miles round trip. All hikes will include some elevation gain!

What do I need to bring?

You do not need to bring any equipment relating to the surveys. You do need to bring the essentials for any hiker: sturdy shoes, water, lunch, and appropriate clothing for the weather. You may want to bring trekking poles, sunglasses, and a camera to take pictures of the stunning scenery and beautiful butterflies!

Is the program catch-and-release?

Yes. Butterflies will be captured in order to make identification to species level. After they are identified, they are sent on their merry way.

Where and when does it take place?

Surveys are completed during the summer season, Monday through Friday, when the survey routes are free of snow. The ten permanent survey routes are located within Mount Rainier and North Cascades National Parks, and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests. It is your choice as to which survey route or survey routes you would like to participate in.



Figure 3. A volunteer walks the survey route

Do volunteers work alone?

Volunteers always work with a park scientist or an experienced volunteer. Work groups usually consist of two to four people.

Do you have housing/ Am I expected to camp?

Most volunteers drive in for the day. However, if it is more convenient for you to camp before or after the survey, a free campsite will be provided for you in a front-country campground for one or two nights. Unfortunately there is no housing available other than camping.

How do I sign up?

Contact our project lead to choose a survey route and a start date. You will be signed up as a volunteer by completing a sign-up sheet and can do this either at the training or your first day of volunteering.

Contact

Regina Rochefort- Project lead

- Regina_Rochefort@nps.gov
- nps_nocascadebutterflies@nps.gov

