



Second graders leaned in as PF biologist Matt King explained the monarch's long migration and why milkweed is essential to their survival. The lesson gave students a simple, hands-on picture of conservation in action.

PF & TWEP: Planting Milkweed, Growing Conservation

A group of second graders stepped outside their classroom this week to take part in a hands-on conservation lesson led by volunteers from the local Pheasants Forever chapter and TWEP. The focus was simple but powerful: understanding how monarch butterflies depend on milkweed and how small actions can help restore habitat across our county.

The lesson began with a question that surprised the students: “*What does a monarch caterpillar eat?*” When they learned that monarchs can only survive on milkweed, the conversation quickly turned to how habitat loss affects wildlife and why native plants matter on working landscapes.

The milkweed seeds were started in flats then placed outside. Volunteers explained that milkweed doesn’t sprout right away — it needs a winter-like cold period, called stratification, before it can germinate in the spring. The children pressed the seeds into the soil, firmed it gently, and talked about how some of the most important things in nature take patience. A few wondered how butterflies would “know where to find them,” and one student proudly said planting seeds meant he was “helping the whole world.”

Teachers noted how valuable it was for students to connect directly with the land. Through a simple planting activity, they learned about pollinators, food systems, and the role native plants play in supporting pheasants, songbirds, and other wildlife.

By planting milkweed seeds, these second graders helped rebuild a small piece of the grassland habitat that once covered much of our region — and they left with a clearer understanding that conservation begins with paying attention and planting something that grows. Be part of the team restoring habitat, building public awareness, and teaching the next generation. Learn more at TWEP (twep.org) or connect with your local PF chapter at cvpf.net.