



Annual Celebration Brings Awareness About the Importance of Pollinators

National Pollinator Week, established by the U.S. Senate in 2007, is an annual celebration of pollinators and their role in our ecosystem, economy, and world food supply. Governor Asa Hutchinson has proclaimed June 19-25 as Arkansas Pollinator Week to coincide with this year's National Pollinator Week.

Pollinators comprise a diversity of wild creatures from birds and bats to butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, and even the occasional land mammal or reptile. National Pollinator Week focuses on the importance of pollinating animals and the urgent issue of their declining numbers.

Pollination is a vital stage in the life cycle of all flowering plants. It occurs when pollen grains are moved between two flowers of the same species by wind or animals. Successful pollination may require visits by multiple pollinators to a single flower. However, successful pollination results in healthy fruit and fertile seeds, which allows the plant to reproduce. Without the actions of pollinators, agricultural economies, our food supply, and surrounding landscapes would collapse. Pollinator health affects everyone.

The Impact of Pollinators

Did you know?

- Seventy-five percent of all flowering plant species need the help of animals to move their heavy pollen grains from plant to plant for fertilization.
- Over 200,000 species of animals act as pollinators, and of those, 1,000 are hummingbirds, bats, and small animals. (Source: USDA Forest Service) The rest are insects, such as beetles, bees, ants, wasps, butterflies, and moths.
- One out of every three bites of food you eat is available because of pollinators. Foods and beverages produced with the help of pollinators include: apples, blueberries, chocolate, peaches, pumpkins, vanilla, almonds, and tequila. For a list of foods and their pollinators, go to http://pollinator.org/list_of_pollinated_food.htm.
- In economic terms, pollinators add \$217 billion to the global economy. (Source: Pollinator Partnership). In the U.S., pollination by honeybees and other insects provide \$40 billion worth of products annually. (Source: USDA Forest Service)

- Insect pollinators are an important food source for many birds, fish, and mammals. U.S. citizens spend more than \$60 billion each year on fishing, hunting, and observing wildlife, and approximately \$49 billion of that is possible due to insects. (Source: U.S. Census 1996)

Are Pollinators in Danger?



There is evidence worldwide that the population of pollinating animals is in decline. Many pollinators are federally “listed” species, providing evidence of their disappearance. As of 2015, at least 2 bat and 13 bird species listed as federally endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are pollinators [Source: North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)]. Monarchs have seen a 90 percent decline in population in recent years (Source: Pollinator Partnership). At least 10 different bumble bee species in the U.S. are not spotted with normal frequency, and four seem to have disappeared from their normal ranges [Source: University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service (UACES)]. The number of commercially managed honeybee colonies in the U.S. has declined from 5.9 million in the 1940s to 2.7 million in 1995. Feral bees, bees that are not domesticated, are essentially gone from the U.S. (Source: NAPPC).

Due to fewer natural pollinators and increased agricultural production, farmers have had to hire beekeeping companies to bring hives to pollinate their crops. Honey bee hives are moved by truck in spring from their winter homes to areas where crops bloom. In some countries, such as China, pollinator numbers have declined so much that people must hand pollinate food crops. The large loss of pollinator numbers has alarmed many within the scientific and agricultural industry, who fear the pollinator population decline has created a pollinator crisis, in which there are not enough pollinators to supply the demands of the agricultural industry.

What is ANHC Doing to Help?

The ANHC maintains a System of Natural Areas that encompasses a wide range of natural communities and supports a rich diversity of animal and plant species. The natural areas that we protect provide valuable habitat and a diversity of native plants, both important factors for pollinator survival.

Stewardship activities on natural areas help to create openings in the forest canopy, allowing sunlight to break through and encourage the growth of herbaceous plants. This benefits pollinators and other protected species, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). In addition, surveys of natural areas are compiled in the ANHC’s biodiversity database where results can be used to gauge the health and stability of rare species,

identify high priority sites for conservation, and guide natural area management practices.

In 2016, the ANHC and partners from federal, state, and local agencies, non-profits and private organizations began work on the Arkansas Native Seed Program (ANSP). Planting native seed is often part of a habitat restoration or improvement plan, using plants that naturally occur within a particular ecosystem, therefore benefiting native wildlife. Working together and keeping with guidelines established by the National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration, the ANSP has established a plan to provide appropriate seed for projects across Arkansas. Future potential benefits include new market opportunities for private growers, improved and expanded wildlife habitat, new partnerships, and research opportunities.

What Can I Do To Help?

Grow plants that are native to your region and provide nectar for adult insects and food for larvae. ANHC has a Native Gardening Guide "Native Plants for Your Arkansas Garden" available for download as a PDF on our website.

- Install houses for bats and native bees.
- Design your garden so that there is a continuous succession of plants flowering from spring through fall.
- Provide water for butterflies in shallow containers that won't become a mosquito breeding area. Refill containers daily.
- Provide hummingbirds with feeders and other birds with birdseed.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticide use. If you must use pesticides, then choose the least toxic and most selective products, applying them at night when pollinators aren't as active.

For more information about pollinators or Pollinator Week, visit www.pollinator.org.