



Allegheny Brambles

An informational article about the Allegheny National Forest

United States
Department of Agriculture

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Our Future Flies on the Wings of Pollinators!

National Pollinator Week June 24 – 30, 2007

Did you know?

- Animal pollinators (bees, butterflies, birds, etc.) are needed for the reproduction of 90% of flowering plants and one third of human food crops.
- Worldwide, approximately 1,000 plants grown for food, beverages, fibers, spices, and medicines need to be pollinated by animals in order to produce the goods humans use.
- In the United States, pollination by honeybees and other insects produces \$40 billion dollars worth of products annually.
- The decline in the health and number of pollinators poses a significant threat to global food webs, human health and plant diversity world-wide.

What are Pollinators?

Animals that assist plants in their reproduction as pollinators include bats, butterflies, moths, flies, birds, beetles, ants, and bees. Pollinators are responsible for assisting over 90% of the world's flowering plants. Without them, humans and wildlife wouldn't have much to eat or look at!

What is pollination?

Pollination is the act of transferring pollen grains from the male part (anther) of a flower to the female part (pistil) of the same flower, or another flower. A goal of every living organism, including plants, is to create offspring for the next generation. One of the ways that plants produce offspring is by making seeds. Flowers are the tools that plants use to make seeds. These seeds contain the genetic information to produce a new plant when the soil, water and nutrient conditions allow the seed to sprout and grow into a plant.

Why do pollinators visit flowers?

Insect and other animal pollinators obtain food in the form of energy-rich nectar and/or protein-rich pollen from the flowers they visit, and in return, the flowers receive the services of pollinators carrying pollen from one flower to another.



Swallowtail butterfly. Photo by David Cappaert.

What's happening to our Pollinators?

Pollinators are declining in numbers. Scientists have no definitive answer as to why. “Bee colony collapse” is an example of a loss of bee colonies that is not readily explained. Factors which could contribute to declines include: improper use of pesticides and herbicides; loss of suitable habitat; aggressive competition from non-native species; diseases; climate change; and lack of floral diversity. Predators and parasites may also be taking a toll. Possible declines in the health and population of pollinators pose a significant threat to global food webs, to human health, and to biodiversity.

What can I do to help?

Many people enjoy gardening and with minor changes to our practices, pollinators can be given a helping hand. Pollinators need different kinds of flowers as they have different kinds of mouth parts; some short and some long. Providing an array of native flowers ensures that there will be nectar for a variety of our pollinating friends. In addition, limiting the use of insecticides and herbicides can provide a safer landscape for pollinators to forage in, and plants for their young to live on. Providing items such as bee-blocks, homes for our native bees, which provide breeding and rearing spaces is also another important piece to the pollinator puzzle.

Find out more at:

North American Pollinator Protection Campaign
Working to protect the pollinators of the North American continent
www.nappc.org/

USDA Forest Service Celebrating Wildflowers - Pollinators
www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/index.shtml