



Xerces Update

Donor Newsletter of the Xerces Society

October 2019

If we hope to stem the losses of insect diversity and the services they provide, society must take steps at all levels to protect, restore, and enhance habitat for insects across landscapes—from wildlands to farmland to urban cores. But there is hope because everyone can make a difference. Farmers can add additional habitat and curb pesticide use, governments can make climate adaptation a goal, and even a backyard or apartment balcony can be an important stopover for the smallest of animals upon which we all depend. Working together we can make change. Thank you for your participation.

Scott Black, Director

“I will argue that every scrap of biological diversity is priceless, to be learned and cherished, and never to be surrendered without a struggle.”

– E. O. Wilson



Fireflies are well-loved, but they may be in trouble. Fireflies are not flies but are actually beetles, in the family Lampyridae. They use bioluminescent light to communicate with each other, primarily to attract mates. We know that some of the habitats they depend on are disappearing, and several other threats have been identified, including light pollution, pesticides, poor water quality, drought, over collection for the medical trade, and invasive species. There is still much to be learned about the world of fireflies. Xerces will continue to seek a better understanding of these enchanting animals and how best to protect them. May their lights shine on for their sakes, and for ours.

(Photo: Terry Priest / Flickr Creative Commons.)

Connect, learn, discover

Our website contains a wealth of information about our work and what you can do to help invertebrates. Articles and updates are posted to our blog and you can sign up for our e-newsletter. You can also connect with us @xercessociety on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter!

www.xerces.org

Please note our new mailing address for donations and membership renewals:

P. O. Box 97387
Washington, DC 20090-7387

(855) 232-6639 www.xerces.org



Making your yard a safe place for pollinators

Around the world, bee and butterfly populations are experiencing declines. Residential areas provide important food and shelter for many of our declining species. By establishing habitat in your yard, you can be an active part of restoring species on the brink.

Making your home pollinator-friendly is easy and rewarding. Most of North America's native bee species forage over a distance of a few hundred yards, so with a little planning, your yard can provide a safe space for bees and other species to thrive. All you need to give them are flowering plants throughout the growing season, undisturbed places to nest, and protection from pesticides.

Xerces released two new fact sheets to help you with these efforts: **Smarter Pest Management: Protecting Pollinators at Home** and **Protecting Pollinators from Pesticides: Fungicide Impacts on Pollinators**.

Smarter Pest Management: Protecting Pollinators at Home gives you easy and essential tips to help you manage your yard and garden in a pollinator-friendly way. This guide gives you a brief overview of different pesticides and their impact on pollinators so that you can make wise, informed decisions about how you choose to care for your yard.

Protecting Pollinators from Pesticides: Fungicide Impacts on Pollinators reviews the current literature on fungicides and pollinators to piece together potential risks and how best to respond. Fungicides have long been considered relatively harmless for bees. A number of recent studies, however, are calling this assumption into question. Though most fungicide exposures won't kill a bee immediately, a growing body of research suggests that some fungicides can cause subtle yet significant harm. This fact sheet delves into how these impacts on pollinators occur, and offers mitigation measures and alternative pest management strategies.

You can download these fact sheets for free at: xerces.org/pesticides-in-your-garden



Garden habitat. (Photo: Kara Keating-Stuart.)



Habitat created by Xerces donor Sue Donora. (Photo: Sue Donora.)

Over **10,000 people** have taken the Pollinator Protection Pledge and made the commitment to create safe, quality habitat to help bring back the pollinators.

You can take the pledge too at xerces.org/bringbackthepollinators

and get your habitat sign at xerces.org/gifts

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...and our deepest gratitude.

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xerces.org/donate



Jewels of the night: The magical flickering of fireflies is becoming less common. (Photo: Mike Lewinsky / Flickr Creative Commons.)

IN THE NEWS

Insects lose as the Trump administration weakens the Endangered Species Act

The Trump administration has introduced changes to implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that will weaken the act and make it harder to protect animals that need our help. For example, the monarch butterfly could ultimately be listed as threatened, but under the new regulations not gain actual protection, despite the fact that the entire North American population is on an extinction trajectory. Five of the main areas of concern arising from the new regulations include:

1. **Economic costs now may be considered when making listing decisions**, whereas in the past the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was directed to not consider the cost of protecting species. This could prevent species protection, even if the species faces a high extinction risk.
2. **Species listed as threatened may no longer receive protections**. In the past, a species listed as threatened was automatically given the same protections as an endangered species; this is no longer the case.
3. **It will be easier for the USFWS to not designate Critical Habitat**, areas deemed essential for a listed species to recover.
4. **Species may be delisted before they meet the goals of their specific recovery plans**. Previously, a species could be taken off the ESA list only once its recovery goals have been met.
5. **Species threatened by climate change will be harder to protect** under these new rules, even though climate change is a serious and legitimate threat to the survival of so many species.

These changes represent a clear win for industry and development, at the expense of vulnerable wildlife. The ESA is a critical conservation tool. Earlier this year, Xerces and partners asked for emergency ESA protection for the Bethany Beach firefly, of which only seven small coastal Delaware populations exist. This species desperately needs protection—but with these revised rules, does it even have a chance at receiving protection? And if it does, will it be meaningful? Who really wants to live in a world without a diversity of butterflies to fill the sky, bees to pollinate our food and flowers, and fireflies to light up the night?

If monarchs are listed as threatened, the Endangered Species Act may not offer them any meaningful protection once the new regulations defining how the law is applied take effect. (Photo: Xerces Society / Stephanie McKnight.)



Your donor newsletter from the Xerces Society!

You can make a difference. Get into nature, and get involved!



Through our community science programs—the Thanksgiving and New Year’s Monarch Counts, the Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper, Bumble Bee Watch, and our most recent regional Bumble Bee Atlas projects—we are harnessing the power of thousands of people to gather valuable conservation data. (Photo: Xerces Society / Rachel Dunham.)

