



Meet the Pollinators

Keep an eye out for pollinators in your habitat!

Now that spring is here, your habitat is likely buzzing with activity from many pollinators. Read on to find out a little bit more about some of the pollinators that you might find in your habitat.

Pollinators are essential to our environment. Over 85% of the world's flowering plants, including more than two-thirds of the world's crop species, require an animal, usually an insect, for pollination. The United States alone grows more than 100 crops that either need or benefit from pollinators, and the economic value of these native pollinators is estimated at \$3 billion per year in the U.S. Beyond agriculture, pollinators are vital members of most terrestrial ecosystems. Fruits and seeds derived from insect pollination are a major part of the diet of many animals. The plants in your habitat kits were chosen because they support a diversity of pollinators. Some are prized sources of pollen and nectar, others were included because they are host plants for declining butterflies. As your habitat grows, you'll find more and more pollinators visiting. Read on to learn a little more about some of these important insects.

Bees. Bees are considered the most important group of pollinators for agricultural crops as well as for many natural areas. Bees are particularly efficient and effective pollinators because all adults visit flowers to drink nectar and adult females actively collect pollen for their young. There are approximately 1600 species of bees in California! At Pinnacles National Park, scientists have documented almost 400 species of bees, making it one of the most diverse bee communities on Earth!

Bees come in many shapes and sizes, from the tiny *Perdita* to large carpenter bees. Unlike the well-known honey bees, most bee species are solitary. About 70% of all wild bee species nest in the

ground, while about 30% are cavity nesters, and about 1% of bee species nest in hives- including honey bees and bumble bees.

Flies. Flies are common visitors to flowers, and can pollinate plants while drinking nectar. Pollinating flies often go unnoticed, because many of the nectar feeding species have coloration that mimics bees. Flies can be differentiated from bees by their short, stubby antennae, and large eyes, which often meet at the top of their heads.

Butterflies. There are over 280 species of butterflies in California (depending on how you count subspecies). Butterflies can aid in pollination while feeding on nectar from flowers. With their striking transformation from a plant-chewing caterpillar to a beautiful nectar-drinking adult, butterflies are some of the most beloved insects. The plants that butterflies feed on as caterpillars are called *host plants*. Some species have very narrow host plant needs for their caterpillars- such as monarchs that only feed on milkweed. Your habitat kits contain host plants for many species of butterflies. While caterpillars can be quite picky, most adult butterflies feed on nectar from a wide variety of plants.

Keep an eye out for these and other invertebrates among your plants. We bet that as your habitat matures you'll see more and more visitors using your habitat.

Resources

Xerces guidance on providing [nesting and overwintering pollinator habitat](#)

[Bumble Bee Watch](#)

[Bumble Bee Atlas](#)

[Bee Monitoring Tools](#)

Learn more about Xerces [California Monarch and Pollinator Habitat Kits](#)

Questions? Contact us at centralvalleypollinators@xerces.org

