



Community Science

Learn about community science projects you can contribute to while enjoying your habitat!

One way to learn more about the pollinators using your habitat, while also generating valuable information about these species, is to contribute to community science projects. Community science is a way for everyone to contribute to scientific research by sharing information about species that they observe in nature. Below are a few optional community science projects that you can contribute to while spending time in your habitat.

Xerces' Community Science Projects:

Monarchs

It is very satisfying to find monarch butterflies visiting your habitat. There are a few different community science projects that you can contribute to that involve monarchs. First of all, if you observe adult monarchs nectaring (drinking nectar from flowers) on any plants in your habitat, you can fill out this [quick form](#). This information helps us to refine our understanding of what plants monarchs use most and helps inform our plant lists and other guidance for people managing lands for monarchs. We don't have enough data on this in Western states, so any nectaring observations you enter will be extremely helpful!

Xerces and others have been trialing some gps tags that allow us to track monarchs. These tags are giving us valuable information about monarch behavior at their overwintering sites. You can follow tagged monarchs through the Project Monarch apps available for [iPhone](#) and [Android](#). Follow along today!

Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper

The [Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper](#) (WMMM) helps us to learn more about the biology of western monarchs, and about the distribution and biology of milkweeds in the Western U.S. Monarch observations submitted to WMMM are very valuable in helping us learn more about when monarchs leave overwintering sites, and where they are most commonly found in different parts of the year. Scientists are especially interested in observations taken in early spring (~March - May). The easiest way to participate in the WMMM is through iNaturalist (see below). Once you have an iNat account, select “projects” and search for Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper. Join the project, and then any observations of milkweed or monarchs that you make through iNat will be added to the WMMM.

Bumble Bee Watch

Did you know there are 25 species of bumble bees in California? These animals are important pollinators across California’s habitats, and your habitat can help to support them. You can participate in [Bumble Bee Watch](#) (BBW) to learn which species are using your habitat and help scientists to conserve them. After setting up a free account, you can submit photos of bumble bees that you spot in your native plant habitat (or anywhere else). BBW has an [interactive field guide](#) that can help you narrow down which species of bumble bee you observed, and your ID will be verified by one of Xerces’ bumble bee experts. It’s helpful to submit more than one [photo](#) to show the bee from different angles.

California Bumble Bee Atlas

For those of you who are keen to learn more about California’s bumble bees, consider participating in the [California Bumble Bee Atlas](#) (CABBA) project. Participants choose a grid cell where they would like to work, and then agree to conduct surveys to help learn more about California’s bumble bees. During a survey, participants spend 45 minutes capturing all the bumble bees they can find. Bumble bees are placed in a cooler to slow them down so they can be photographed (the bees are not harmed). You then upload your photos to BBW so that each bumble bee can be identified to species by Xerces’ bumble bee experts. A two hour training is required to participate.

CABBA is part of Xerces’ larger network of [Bumble Bee Atlas](#) projects and helps us to learn more about the distribution and conservation status of North American bumble bees.

Other Community Science Projects:

iNaturalist

iNaturalist, often referred to as [iNat](#) is a really great community science app for learning more about the natural world while contributing data for science and conservation. iNat describes itself as “...an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature”. [To use iNat](#), you start by setting up a free account and downloading the app, but you can also use it from your computer. When you are spending time outside, you can post photos of different species that you come across and identify to the level that you are able. Other people can then help to narrow down or verify your identification. It’s a lot of fun.

We hope you will enjoy observing the many different species using your new habitat, and consider contributing to one of these community science projects.

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

Questions? Contact us at centralvalleypollinators@xerces.org

