



Xerces Update

Donor Newsletter of the Xerces Society

August 2017

A few weeks ago, I took my daughter to lacrosse practice. While she was playing, I wandered the edges of the high school fields looking for bees and butterflies. On this occasion I found something even cooler: in a sandy patch beside the softball field was a nesting colony of great golden digger wasps. They were beautiful, with hair that shimmered gold, and big enough to fly with their katydid prey. I sat and watched in wonder.

As the wasps returned again and again with katydids to stock their nests, I was reminded of how seemingly mundane places can support remarkable wildlife. This was no wildlife refuge, just a high school field surrounded by suburbia.

Urban areas can be rich in insect life. When thoughtfully cared for, gardens, school, parks, and other greenspaces have a role to play in ensuring we all have the opportunity for such an encounter. Thank you for all you do to support insects.

- Matthew Shepherd, Communications Director

"There is something fundamentally wrong in treating the earth as if it were a business in liquidation."

- Herman E. Dale, World Bank economist



It's not often that we can say a bumble bee is a media star, but over the last few years the rusty patched bumble bee has been featured on a candy bar, in an award-winning film, and in hundreds of media articles. And it is well-deserved. This beautiful bee was common from Minnesota to the Atlantic and is now restricted to scattered locations in only a handful of states. After a decade of surveys and research to confirm this decline, the Xerces Society petitioned the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to protect this bee under the Endangered Species Act. This work fueled the massive upwelling of public support for bee. The rusty patched gained protection in March, becoming the first bee in the continental U.S. with federal protection. (Photo: Clay Bolt.)



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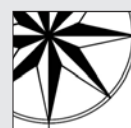
Our website contains a wealth of information about our work and what you can do to help invertebrates. Articles and updates are posted to our blog and you can sign up for our e-newsletter. You can also connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and now Instagram too!

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Bee Better Certified™: Creating Better Places for Bees

We realize that, because farming encompasses about half of the U.S. land base, we must work with farmers if we want to provide for a long-term future for pollinators. Xerces works closely with growers to protect and restore high-quality habitat on their farms. The dedication of these individuals is inspiring. They are often motivated to help bees simply because it's the right thing to do, a way to improve their land for the future. Thanks to our new program, farmers like these now have a way to be recognized for such efforts.

Launched in June, Bee Better Certified™ is the first third-party farm certification program focused specifically on pollinator conservation. The goal of Bee Better Certified is to give bees a healthy place to live. But the program also celebrates farmers for their conservation work, allows businesses to market products using a packaging seal that demonstrates they work with conservation-minded growers, and gives consumers confidence in knowing that what they are purchasing benefits pollinators and the farmers working to protect them.

At the heart of Bee Better Certified is a set of standards that establish a high bar for habitat restoration—farmers are required to dedicate at least 5% of their land to flower-rich habitat—and pesticide risk reduction, and ensure that the program meets its goal of helping bees.

This focus on habitat is unique among farm certification programs, yet compatible with any farming operation: large or small, organic or conventional, and everything in between.

Implementing the production standards can enhance any operation, but in particular they will help transition conventional growers towards more sustainable practices.

Bee Better Certified was developed with the guidance of an outstanding advisory board comprised of experts in the fields of agriculture, certification, pesticide risk mitigation, pollinator research, retail, and sustainable sourcing. It was launched thanks to startup funding through the Conservation Innovation Grant program run by U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. We are partnering with Oregon Tilth, one of the largest organic certifiers in the U.S., as the first Bee Better Certified accredited certification body.



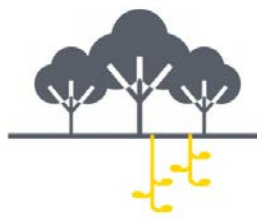
The Bee Better Certified™ seal will be used by farms to show they meet the requirements, and could be used on packaging of products made with ingredients from these farms.

Bee Better Certified™ Production Standards

Before a farm can be certified, it must meet standards for habitat provision, pesticide reduction, and commercial bumble bee management. The basic requirements are:



Five percent of the land must be flower-rich habitat



Nest sites for native bees must be included in the habitat



Habitats must be protected from insecticides



Commercially reared bumble bees can be used only in sealed environments

Learn more at www.beebettercertified.org

MONTHLY GIVING

No renewal notices,
convenient payment options,
a continued connection

...and our deepest gratitude.

Join the movement at
xerces.org/donate



Flowering ground cover between rows supports pollinators and other beneficial insects in this almond orchard. (Photo: The Xerces Society/Jessa Kay Cruz.)

LOCAL ACTION

Every Species Needs a Voice: Speak Up!

While you might be enamored with carpenter bees, beetles, or spiders, others might see these creatures as “pests” to be avoided or killed. Have you seen roadsides that were mowed for no apparent reason? How about insecticide use in your parks; could that be reduced or eliminated? Changing attitudes and encouraging the adoption of new insect-friendly methods begins with building awareness, and writing a letter to the editor of your local paper is still one of the best ways to educate your community. Here are some tips for writing an effective letter.

First of all, track down information about submitting a letter to your local paper. In both print and online editions, this is typically on the letters page itself. Maybe the most important detail is the word count limit, which is often only 250 words. Most newspapers now require letters to be submitted via email or its website. Be sure to include your personal information (address, telephone number, and so on). This is so the editors can verify who you are rather than for publication.

It is lovely, and more effective, to use a personal story—how this issue affects you or what you’ve done—to make your point. But remember, letters are short, so it’s important to keep your message focused and as specific as possible. Also keep in mind that your letter may be edited to fit the available space on the page. Make the editor’s job easier by getting to your point quickly and having important information near to the beginning!

You can also help the editor by providing a headline. While the editor will be responsible for a good headline, it is helpful (and sometimes required) to provide this information. Think of the headline as the subject line of an email; it should be a one-phrase summary of the letter.

We hope this will inspire you to lend your voice to the conversation! If you’re not sure where to start or want information, our website has dozens of fact sheets, brochures, and information to inspire you. You’ll also find a 250-word sample letter in one of the articles in our Conservation Comes Home blog, www.xerces.org/conservation-comes-home.

Get together with friends and make letter writing a social event—
typewriters optional! (Photo: Neil Kandalgaonkar, Flickr.)



Your donor newsletter from the Xerces Society!



Looking to learn?

**Workshops, talks, field
days, and more.**

**Find information at
www.xerces.org/event/**

Xerces in the media

Washington Post, 3/21/2017

Rusty patched bumblebee joins endangered species list

"Now that the Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the rusty patched bumblebee as endangered, it stands a chance of surviving the many threats it faces," said Sarina Jepsen, the group's director of endangered species.

Forbes, 6/29/2017

We Have Even More Evidence That Pesticides Are Hurting Bees

Aimée Code, pesticide program director for the Xerces Society... "Many of these studies we'd seen in past were honed in on the effects at a specific farm or a narrow timeframe. These begin to show on a large scale, over time these are chemicals that are going to be harming our [bee] populations, both managed and wild."

Western Farm Press, 6/19/2017

'Bee Better Certification' helps farmers, ranchers benefit pollinators

"Many species of bees have suffered declines over the years, but by creating habitat and reducing pesticide use, Bee Better is generating meaningful change on working farms, helping to preserve crop pollinators, and the valuable services they provide to farmers," Black said.

