

FEBRUARY 2018



### Protecting Pollinators at NIH

Did you know that one in every three bites of food that we consume is dependent on pollinators?<sup>1</sup> Pollinators assist with producing 35% of the global food supply and almost 90% of the world's flowering plants.<sup>1</sup> Pollinators are animals that carry pollen from the male to female parts of flowers. This process allows the plants to reproduce, forming the seeds, berries, fruits and other plant foods that are the foundation of the food chain.<sup>2</sup> The most publicized pollinators are bees and butterflies, however many other insects (such as moths, wasps, flies and beetles), along with birds, bats, reptiles and amphibians can also function as pollinators.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, pollinator populations are in decline worldwide.<sup>2</sup> The Center for Biological Diversity claims that nearly 1 in 4 North American native bee species are currently imperiled and have an increased risk of extinction.<sup>1</sup> Many other insects, including butterflies, are also at risk due to habitat loss, changes in climate and the use of some pesticides.<sup>2</sup> The monarch butterfly population (one of the most recognizable and iconic butterfly species in North America) has declined by more than 90 percent since the 1990's!<sup>3</sup> This article will be focusing on the pollinator initiatives that promote the monarch butterfly population on NIH campuses. The [Presidential Memorandum on Pollinators](#) and [National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators](#) underscore the importance of these efforts. To learn more about other pollinator initiatives at NIH, please [click here](#).

The Bethesda and Research Triangle Park (RTP) campuses each house many pollinator habitats ranging from grasslands to wetlands to wildflower meadows. There are currently over 12 acres of habitat on the Bethesda Campus, including four natural meadows, two manicured pollinator gardens, and several native planting beds- [click here for a complete map](#). Additionally, the RTP campus contributes to pollinator habitats by conserving approximately 34 acres of transition [riparian zone](#) and approximately two acres of [dedicated wildflower meadows](#) as part of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation Butterfly Highway Program.

Last year there were numerous monarch butterfly sightings on the Bethesda campus due to the habitat restoration efforts. One of the best spots on the Bethesda campus to catch a glimpse of the monarch is the butterfly garden located just south of Building 49. Within the next year, the Bethesda campus intends to add six more species of flowers to this butterfly garden, ensuring there will be at least two nectar sources available to visiting butterflies throughout the season. This planting will include two different Milkweed species that act as host plants for the monarch species. Milkweed (genus *Asclepias*) is the only plant that monarch caterpillars will eat, meaning they are absolutely essential for inclusion in any butterfly garden. The RTP campus has created a plot of Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) that is designed specifically to attract and sustain [monarch butterflies](#).

For further information or with questions regarding the Bethesda campus, please contact [Mr. Brandon Hartz](#). For inquiries regarding the RTP campus, please contact [Mr. Paul Johnson](#).

### TAKE ACTION



#### How Can You Help Pollinators?

Do you want to help with the efforts to increase pollinator habitats around NIH? We'll teach you how to contribute while you are on campus and also how to help pollinators at your own home!

[LEARN MORE](#)

### STAFF SPOTLIGHT



#### Meet the Staff that Make NIH Pollinator Initiatives Possible!

These individuals are the driving force behind the pollinator initiatives at NIH! Whether it's advocating for more projects or actually doing the physical work, they make the pollinator efforts at NIH successful!

[LEARN MORE](#)

### NEMS TRAINING

**Did you know?** Milkweed is the only food source for Monarch caterpillars. NIH has planted milkweed on both the Bethesda and RTP campuses to increase the presence of pollinators such as the Monarch butterfly. To learn more about greening initiatives at NIH, please visit the [NEMS Training webpage](#) to view a short (20 minute) NIH environmental awareness training.