

Colorado Pollinator Network

The 2nd Annual Pollinator Summit:

“Every Flower Counts: Cultivating Minds and Landscapes for Pollinators”

Denver Botanical Gardens

Life on earth depends on pollinators. Whether we know it or not, we all have a vital connection to pollinators – mostly insects like bees and butterflies. We know that wildlife and livestock depend largely upon pollinated plants, but also, our own agriculture and human diet rely heavily upon pollinating insects. Indeed, more than two-thirds of our crop species—including fruit, vegetable, spice, nut, and oilseed crops—are dependent upon pollinators.

Unfortunately, rapid and continual pollinator declines put everything at risk. Beekeepers report that they are losing 30% to 40% of their hives every year. Less well-known are the drastic declines in native North American pollinator populations. Over 25% of North America’s bumble bees may face extinction, and monarch butterfly populations have declined by more than 80% worldwide, mainly due to loss of breeding and feeding habitat.

Fortunately, an increasing number of people and interest groups are becoming aware of these alarming pollinator statistics, are taking action, and committing their talents and efforts to reversing this disturbing trend. The *Annual Pollinator Summit*, launched for the first time last year in Denver, is an important event for anyone who is concerned about our pollinators and their habitat.

The 2nd Annual Pollinator Summit was convened on November 2, 2017, in Mitchell Hall at the beautiful Denver Botanic Garden. This important conference was made possible through a collaborative effort sponsored by contributing members of the Colorado Pollinator Network, an organization committed to collaboration and partnership toward improving pollinator habitat in Colorado. This year’s Pollinator Summit was designed for a diverse gathering of organizations, agencies, businesses, professionals, educators, growers, land managers, researchers and volunteers – all keenly interested in and actively working to preserve, conserve and restore Colorado’s rapidly declining pollinator populations and their habitats.

Executive director of the Xerces Society, Scott Hoffman Black, kicked-off the Summit as the first keynote speaker with a fascinating presentation, *Bringing Back the Pollinators: An Integrated Landscape Approach to Pollinator Conservation*. Scott is an internationally renowned conservationist who has been at the forefront of the pollinator conservation movement for two decades. Scott’s presentation focused on explaining the drastic decline in pollinator invertebrate species worldwide (e.g. A 95% reduction in Western Monarch butterfly population) , and offered inspiring ideas for solutions to this crisis (such as reducing the use of systemic insecticides - particularly Neonicotinoids - which can decimate beneficial insect populations).

Other presenters included nationally-recognized and regional experts, such as CDOT’s Landscape Architecture Section Manager, Mike Banovich, CDOT Landscape Architect Greg Fischer, CDOT Wildlife Program Manager, Jeff Peterson and representative consultants to CDOT, Paul Nikolai, RLA of Parsons Corporation (Engineering) and Jerry Miller of Pheasants Forever, as well as elected officials such

as Colorado State Senate District 18 (Boulder) Senator Steve Fenberg and House Majority Leader and State Representative KC Becker. These speakers came together in panel discussions, slide presentations and interactive forums to address vital issues to Colorado’s pollinators & their habitat.



CDOT Landscape Architecture Section Manager, Mike Banovich, RLA, speaking with CO State Senator Steve Fenberg and CO State Representative KC Becker

Engaging presentation topics ranged from the creation of continual and connective landscape corridors with highway wildflower plantings, specifically through a recent CO State Legislature Joint Resolution (HJR 17-1029) permitting CDOT to designate I-76 as a “Colorado Pollinator Highway,” ([Link: a](#)) to the insights provided by microscopic analysis of intricate pollen grains as an investigative tool for discovery of historical information, health matters and even climate change.

Q & A sessions included lively discussions on a variety of issues pertaining to highway maintenance, such as the practice of limiting mowing along highway right-of-ways during insect breeding and foraging seasons, seeding roadsides exclusively with native grasses and forbs with the goal of replicating natural vegetative systems, widespread concern for pesticides – particularly the use of Neonicotinoids and systemic insecticides – along highway corridors, sustainable management and elimination of noxious weeds, the desire for ongoing and comprehensive training for maintenance personnel and the challenge of managing and restoring native habitat on large areas of public lands, such as along highway corridors and on US Forest Service and BLM lands.

Innovative solutions for improving pollinator habitat included targeted volunteer planting and seeding efforts, and establishing connective shrub and tree corridors by creating “living snow fences,” with

pollinator-supporting species like plums and chokecherries. Pollinator habitat can be established through collaborative efforts of key groups such as Pheasants Forever, and national youth pollinator programs and partnering programs with governmental agencies such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The work of these groups and agencies has gained powerful support, particularly from the Federal Highways Administration under the U.S. Dept. of Transportation, which is authorized to enact a 2014 Presidential Memorandum to create a federal strategy to promote pollinators along U.S. highways. ([Link: b](#)).

In response to this directive, the FHWA has produced an important guide for transportation agencies to enact pollinator-friendly policies and practices. This landmark publication, *Roadside Best Management Practices that Benefit Pollinators, A Handbook for Supporting Pollinators through Roadside Maintenance and Landscape Design, 2015*, is a very important guiding document for state DOTs to implement roadside planning and maintenance policies that will create habitat which helps to supports pollinator, and in turn, all of us. ([Link: c](#))

We all depend upon pollinators for our very existence. The 2nd Annual Pollinator Summit marked an important milestone in the effort to save pollinators and their habitat. There is much work to do in order to preserve, protect, improve and sustain pollinator habitat for ourselves and future generations. Fortunately, there are many opportunities to make a difference for pollinators like bees, butterflies and all life on earth sustained by them.

Pollinator Resources – How to Get Involved:

Colorado Pollinator Network

<https://www.butterflies.org/copollinatornetwork/>

Colorado Pollinator Network (CPN) is a collaboration between organizations working together to conserve, protect, and create pollinator habitat and to educate communities across Colorado to protect our pollinators. We share best practices, research, resources and knowledge to support this mission. Our vision is for CPN to make Colorado a model state for collaboration on the protection of pollinators.

People and Pollinators

<https://peopleandpollinators.org/>

The People & Pollinators Action Network (PPAN) was born in late 2014 from the modest aim of public policy reform addressing the misapplication of pesticides. In the last three years their efforts have yielded new protections for Colorado's pollinators and important lessons that will help shape our strategy in the future.

Xerces Society

<https://xerces.org>

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation is an international nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats. The name is taken from the now extinct Xerces Blue butterfly (*Glaucopsyche xerces*), the first butterfly known to go extinct in North America as a result of human activities. Programs focus on habitat conservation and restoration, species conservation, protecting pollinators, contributing to watershed health, and reducing harm to invertebrates from pesticide use.

Scott Hoffman Black, Executive Director of Xerces Society: Scott's work has led to protection and restoration of habitat on hundreds of thousands of acres of rangelands, forests, and farmland as well as protection for many endangered species. He is an author of the best-selling *Attracting Native Pollinators*

and Gardening for Butterflies and has written more than two hundred other publications. His work has been honored with several awards, including the 2011 Colorado State University College of Agricultural Sciences Honor Alumnus Award and the U.S. Forest Service “Wings Across the Americas” 2012 Butterfly Conservation Award.

Pheasants Forever <https://www.pheasantsforever.org/>

Pheasants Forever is dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education, and land management policies and programs which influence quality and quantity of upland habitat – which also supports pollinator species. Since forming in 1982, Pheasants Forever has created or enhanced wildlife habitat on more than 15.8 million acres across the US and Canada. With a network of more than 700 chapters and 149,000 members, they accomplish thousands of wildlife habitat projects annually.

(Link: a) Colorado State Legislature – House of Representatives, 2017

House Joint Resolution 17-1029:

Concerning the Designation of Interstate Highway 76 (I-76) as the “Colorado Pollinator Highway
http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017A/bills/2017a_hjr1029_enr.pdf

(Link: b) The Obama White House Archives, **Presidential Memorandum (PM) of June 2014:**

Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/20/presidential-memorandum-creating-federal-strategy-promote-health-honey-b>

U.S. Dept. of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Roadside Best Management Practices that Benefit Pollinators, A Handbook for Supporting Pollinators through Roadside Maintenance and Landscape

Design, https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/ecosystems/vegmgmt_pollinators.asp