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Missouri Bumble Bee Atlas: A Statewide Project Engaging Community Scientists to Track Bumble Bees

Statewide project launches, providing communities with an opportunity to contribute to pollinator conservation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.; Aug 3, 2020—A project to better understand the status of Missouri's bumble bees is being launched this month thanks to a new conservation partnership. The [Missouri Bumble Bee Atlas](#) will combine the efforts of the Missouri Department of Conservation; the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; two nonprofit organizations, Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation; and volunteers spread throughout the state.

Bumble bees play an essential role in sustaining the health of our environment by pollinating flowers in natural areas and contributing to successful harvests on farms. Missouri is home to nearly 10 different species of these charismatic and easily recognizable native bumble bees. Unfortunately, many species of bumble bees, such as the Southern Plains Bumble Bee (*Bombus fraternus*), are experiencing severe declines and face an uncertain future. The goal of the Missouri Bumble Bee Atlas is to learn more about the distribution and needs of these essential pollinators so that more effective efforts can be made to conserve them.

“The information we gather from this project will help us understand what wildflowers our native bumble bees prefer and where to target our restoration efforts for these pollinators,” said Bill White, Community and Private Land Conservation Branch Chief with the Missouri Department of Conservation.

To help launch the Missouri Bumble Bee Atlas, a two-part [virtual training event](#) will be held August 18 and 19 to provide project volunteers with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to conduct bumble bee surveys throughout the state. Project volunteers will submit bumble bee observations using the North American community science platform [Bumble Bee Watch](#).

“Engaging the public in an effort like this is an essential part of the process,” said Katie Lamke, Bumble Bee Conservation Specialist for the Xerces Society. “With a team of trained volunteers actively searching for bumble bees across the state, we will be able to quickly gather a snapshot of how these animals are faring throughout Missouri.”

A major goal of the project is to ensure that the entire state is surveyed. Recent information on bumble bee distribution has been skewed toward urban areas, since they have more people noticing bumble bees. This is an opportunity to get out into more rural areas of Missouri and discover how bumble bees are doing in our natural areas.

“In rural areas, many conservation plantings, like those done through USDA’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), utilize native seed mixes containing species that bumble bees need to survive. This project will be a chance for Missourians to see and record positive impacts of these programs that go far beyond our favorite upland bird species,” said Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever’s Missouri State Coordinator, Casey Bergthold.

The Missouri Bumble Bee Atlas project partners hope that volunteers will join them throughout the state in this effort to protect pollinators. Volunteer recruitment has just begun. To get involved, visit [MoBumbleBeeAtlas.org](#) for more information.

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For more information about the Missouri Bumble Bee Atlas, please visit:
<https://www.mobumblebeeatlas.org>

For more information about Bumble Bee Watch, please visit:
<http://www.bumblebeewatch.org/>

For more information about bumble bee conservation, please visit:
<https://xerces.org/bumblebees/>

About the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

The Xerces Society is a nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. Established in 1971, the Society is a trusted source for science-based information and advice. We collaborate with people and institutions at all levels and our work to protect pollinators encompasses all landscapes. Our team draws together experts from the fields of habitat restoration, entomology, plant ecology, education, farming and conservation biology with a single focus: Protecting the life that sustains us.

