Conservation Corner

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

Most landowners are familiar with the garden-variety pollinators – the most common, of course, is the honeybee. But, did you know there are many other pollinators? Woodland owners are starting to learn about the benefits of broadening the pollinator profile.

While honeybees account for approximately 75 percent of crop plant pollination and many tree species count on wind pollination, several other animals and insects help pollinate grasslands and forests. These pollinators include birds, bats and other mammals. There are also lizards, flies, moths, butterflies and beetles, and more than 4,000 native species of bees in the U.S., like mason, sweat and carpenter bees.

This is why conservation districts in a number of states are beginning to explore management plans that incorporate woodland pollinator habitat. “Woodlands and agroforestry practices provide important habitat for wild bees, bats, butterflies and other pollinators and they are vital for safeguarding ecosystems, for biodiversity and for crop production,” **said Gary Bentrup**, research landscape planner at the USDA National Agroforestry Center.

Research shows that the abundance and number of pollinator species increase in forestland when there are openings in the canopy. Additional studies conclude that prescribed burns provide new territory and nutrients for woodland pollinators that assist in understory regeneration, which ultimately can help in forest restoration efforts.

Pollinators are currently facing many threats, from habitat fragmentation and loss to diseases and parasites, and recent assessments suggest that 40 percent of invertebrate pollinator species may be at risk of extinction worldwide.

“Although we know forests that have recently been subjected to disturbance can be good for pollinating insects, we are only beginning to understand which groups are present and how they respond to forest management,” **said Jim Rivers**, assistant professor in the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. Rivers researches how insect pollinators respond to natural and human-caused disturbance.