

Weaverville Conservation Board to Launch Pollinator Initiative



weaverville
conservation board

We've been hearing a lot lately about the decline of pollinating insect species. These species are extremely important given that about 80% of our major food plant crops rely on them, including virtually all fruits and vegetables. Because

of their commercial importance and because they are experiencing a phenomenon known as colony collapse, the emphasis has been on honeybees – a species that is native to Europe. Another iconic species, the Monarch butterfly, is much in the news because its' numbers have severely declined over the past several years. Although there is uncertainty about the cause of these declines, it is likely to be due to a combination of habitat loss and use of pesticides.

What is less well-known is that we have many native pollinator species. Did you know that there are many other kinds of bees, as well as beetles, moths, wasps, and flies that are also important for pollination? These native insects could actually do the whole job of pollinating our locally-grown crops. But this depends on providing habitat for them. In large agro-ecosystems, like our Midwest and Central Valley of California, the habitat mosaic that might support native pollinators no longer exists. But here in our



area, farms tend to be small and surrounded either by natural habitats or by human-modified landscapes. Home food-producing gardens are of course largely embedded within extensively developed areas that are landscaped primarily with non-native plants (and often overgrown with highly invasive exotics). Few of these non-natives provide what our native pollinators need to survive. Can you imagine how much we could contribute to solving this problem if all of us provided suitable habitat for pollinators in our back yards?

The goal of the Pollinator Initiative is to raise the level of awareness in our Weaverville community about the importance of all our pollinators and to provide residents with the information needed to encourage a healthy pollinator population in our area. The project will include educational programs given by our local experts, activities at the library, tours of local gardens designed to support pollinators, seed giveaways, and plant sales. The initiative will launch in early April and will be conducted in partnership with the Weaverville Library and the Weaverville Garden Club. Please check back with the Garden Club website for updated information on upcoming programs.