



Xerces Society Pollinator Conservation *Highlights of the Past 45 Years*

It began with a butterfly

In 1971, Robert Michael Pyle attended a lecture in London about the large blue butterfly, a species that was on the verge of going extinct in Britain. That inspired him to found an organization to protect butterflies, which he named after the extinct Xerces blue, last seen in 1943 in San Francisco. Over time, the organization's mission expanded to cover a broader range of insects—eventually all invertebrates—but butterflies and other pollinators have remained at the heart of our work.

The pollinator conservation work we do today started in the mid-1990s when the Xerces Society joined the board of the Forgotten Pollinators campaign. This led first to habitat projects on golf courses in Oregon and Washington, and then to farmland habitat creation in California's Central Valley.

During the years since, the Xerces Society has helped steer the national conversation about conserving pollinators. Engagement and interest have built to unprecedented levels among farmers, the food industry, government agencies that support farmers or manage public lands, grocery store customers, gardeners, and essentially anyone who's heard about the plight of bees and butterflies. We are not the only voice, but we continue to be recognized as a leader on these issues.

A trusted source of advice

From small beginnings on a handful of golf courses and farms, the Xerces Society built a successful pollinator conservation program by being a trusted source for science-based information and advice. We partner with university researchers to ensure we offer evidence-based solutions and have undertaken studies into effective habitat creation methods. Now more than 30 strong, with offices in a dozen states, our pollinator team draws together experts from the fields of habitat restoration, entomology, botany, farming, pesticide mitigation, and conservation biology.

Country bees, town bees

Although habitat on farmlands and protection of declining species, particularly bumble bees and the monarch butterfly, have been a major focus, we collaborate with people and institutions at all levels and our work to protect pollinators encompasses all landscapes. We've also worked with park managers and golf course superintendents to bring habitat into those urban landscapes, have collaborated with communities to reduce pesticide use, and in 2012 we launched Bring Back the Pollinators, an initiative to help homeowners and gardeners know that our resources are available for their use as well. Building on this, we are now developing a new urban-based program that will allow us to dramatically expand our ability to help backyards, parks, and other public spaces become havens for native bees and butterflies, and to support urban and suburban residents in advocating for healthy, pollinator habitat on public properties and in private yards.



Salient Dates

- 1971 The Xerces Society founded with a mission of protecting butterflies.
- 1975 Established **Fourth of July Butterfly Count** (now run by NABA).
- 1983 Launch of the **Monarch Project** to protect monarch overwintering sites in California.
- 1987 Purchase of 210-acres adjacent to national reserve in Costa Rica to **protect ground bee nesting site**.
- 1990 Publication of *Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden* (Sierra Club Books).
- 1995 Xerces joins board of the **Forgotten Pollinators campaign**, based at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.
- 1997 First **Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count** held to monitor overwintering monarchs in California.
- 1998 Beginning of Xerces project to study and conserve **native bees on golf courses**.
- 2002 Publication of “**Making Room for Native Pollinators**,” the first guidelines for bee conservation.
- 2003 Award-winning *Pollinator Conservation Handbook* published.
First **farm habitat project** in California’s Central Valley, in collaboration with Claire Kremen.
- 2004 Release of 1st edition of “**Farming for Bees**,” guidelines for conservation on farmland.
Partnership with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service begins.
- 2008 Release of “**Pollinator-Friendly Parks**,” guidelines for enhancing urban greenspaces.
Important new measures incorporated into the **2008 Farm Bill** supporting research into and conservation of pollinators.
- 2009 First **Pollinator Conservation Short Course** presented.
- 2011 *Attracting Native Pollinators* published (Storey Publishing).
- 2012 **Bring Back the Pollinators campaign** launched.
Release of “**Are Neonicotinoids Kills Bees?**”
Launch of **Integrated Crop Pollination Project**, led by Michigan State University.
- 2014 Begin working with communities and cities across the country to shape **local restrictions on pesticide use** to protect pollinators in urban areas.
Launch of **Bumble Bee Watch** citizen science program.
- 2016 Publication of *Gardening for Butterflies* (Timber Press).
Publication of *100 Plants to Feed the Bees* (Storey Publishing).
Release of “**Roadside Best Management Practices that Benefit Pollinators**,” developed for FHWA.
- 2017 Launch of **Impacts of Pesticides on Invertebrates (IPI) Database** website.
Rusty patched bumble bee gains federal protection under ESA.
Launch of **Bee Better Certified**, a first-of-its-kind certification program that incentivizes the large-scale adoption of pollinator conservation methods.

Resources

Books

- Attracting Native Pollinators* (Storey Publishing, 2011)
- Gardening for Butterflies* (Timber Press, 2016)
- 100 Plants to Feed the Bees* (Storey Publishing, 2016)

Online

- Bring Back the Pollinators campaign, <https://xerces.org/bringbackthepollinators/>
- Regional pollinator plant lists, <http://xerces.org/providing-wildflowers-for-pollinators/>
- Protecting pollinators from pesticides, <http://xerces.org/protect-pollinators-from-pesticides/>
- Pollinator Conservation Resource Center, <https://xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/>
- Pollinator conservation on roadsides, <https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation-roadsides/>
- Monarch conservation, <https://xerces.org/monarchs/>
- Regional monarch nectar plant lists, <http://xerces.org/monarch-nectar-plant-guides/>
- Bumble bee conservation, <https://xerces.org/bumblebees/>
- Milkweeds: A Conservation Practitioner’s Guide*, <http://xerces.org/milkweeds-a-conservation-practitioners-guide/>
- Native Thistles: A Conservation Practitioner’s Guide*, <https://xerces.org/native-thistle-guide/>
- Impacts of Pesticides on Invertebrates (IPI) Database, <https://pesticideimpacts.org/>