

Dear Members of the Texas Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta,

You are invited to join the first ever Texas Pollinator Blitz October 7-16, 2016! This unique BioBlitz focuses solely on pollinators throughout the state of Texas. Join the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** and the **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** in encouraging Texans statewide to venture outdoors to find pollinators of all types in gardens, natural areas, nature and community centers and even their backyards! Novices will enjoy recording through social media and trying out our daily challenges. More experienced participants can log their findings on iNaturalist.

Organizations can host special events, programs, designated observation areas or simply encourage participation through your communication channels. We will promote all the participating partners on the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

Why a Pollinator Blitz?

A "Pollinator Blitz" will help bring attention to the role and habitat needs of the monarch butterfly and all our pollinators. We chose the monarch, our state insect, as a symbol for the pollinator blitz. The monarch butterfly is one of the most beautiful and recognizable insects on earth, but it needs our help. The monarch is losing its habitat. As a result, its populations across the United States and into Canada and Mexico have been dropping by about 90% over the past 20 years. Texas is an important state in monarch migration because it is situated between the principal breeding grounds in the north and the overwintering areas in Mexico. Learn more from our former first lady Laura Bush and others: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcyJp_94RfQ

Texas pollinators include bats, bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, wasps, flies, and beetles. These small creatures sustain plant species, human food crops, and even crops for livestock. Roughly one-third of all the food we eat is because of pollination that happened in a farmer's field. In addition to concerns about monarchs, 30 native pollinator/flower-visiting species (bees, butterflies, and moths) are designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Conservation Action Plan.

What is a Pollinator Blitz?

The Texas Pollinator Bliz is a statewide effort to observe and identify as many pollinators as possible from October 7-16, 2016. Texans of all ages can venture outdoors to find pollinators and nectar-producing plants, and then share observations by posting a photo or video to Instagram or iNaturalist. A daily challenge will keep participants on the hunt and add to the fun. All will be encouraged to plant pollinator gardens.

Instagram is the selected social media tool by which any observer can share their observation.

Pollinators can be difficult to identify, so observers are encouraged to post what they know which may be a simple description of the species or its behavior. The more experienced naturalist can post a photo and more details related to the species on iNaturalist.

What's the goal?

The goals of the Texas Pollinator Blitz are to 1) increase awareness of pollinators and pollinator habitat and 2) encourage planting of native, nectar-producing plants and pollinator gardens in communities, schools and backyards across Texas.

Who can participate?

Anyone is invited to participate! A sole individual can participate as well as a large organization. Anyone can participate from a novice to an expert. The only requirement is the joy to be outside looking for pollinators.

How to participate?

To participate in the challenge the basic steps are simple.

1. **Join:** A Facebook event will be set up for the Texas Pollinator Blitz. Join the event on Facebook to stay up to date with all the events and to share information.
2. **Observe:** The first step is to head outside to look for pollinators. Outside can be a yard, local park, playground, public garden, state park, greenbelt, or even a national park. No limits as to where pollinators are found!
3. **Identify:** Once a pollinator is found the next step is to identify the pollinator. Identification can be as simple as a butterfly or bee or as detailed as monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) pollinating a purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*).
4. **Share:** The last step is to take a photo or video of the pollinator and share it either on Instagram or iNaturalist. On Instagram all posts should include #TexasPollinatorBlitz along with any details of the pollinator and location.

As an organization you may wish to:

- Host a Pollinator Blitz event inviting the public to your site to observe, record, and identify pollinators.
- Hold a class on how to use iNaturalist.
- Promote the Texas Pollinator Blitz on your website and social media pages encouraging your visitors and members to participate.
- Invite local experts to your site to search for pollinators with the general public.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to share their observations of pollinators while on site.
- Take your class outside to search for pollinators.
- Plant a pollinator garden.
- & More!

If you would like to be listed as a participating organization in the Texas Pollinator Blitz, please indicate your interest and you will be notified of all Blitz updates.

See you outdoors!

Tanya Zastrow
Director of Programs