



ENVIRONMENT **VIRGINIA** Your Winter Report

Meet the bees your action is helping to save

From half-inch honeybees to the endangered rusty patched bumblebee, the best pollinators need our help. Across the country, bee populations are dropping, sometimes at alarming rates. No matter their size or status, these pollinators face a triple threat of bee-killing pesticides, habitat loss and climate change.

If we're going to save the bees, we'll need the whole Environment Virginia hive behind us. Let's meet some of the bees your action is helping to save:

Native bees

Our country's more than 4,000 native bee species are "specialists" in their field—they're perfectly suited to pollinate only a few specific plants or flowers. The Southeastern blueberry bee, for example, is one hard-working pollinator—visiting as many as 50,000 blueberry flowers and helping to produce up to 6,000 blueberries in its short life.

The squash bee is another specialist (and an early riser, too). In the hours after sunrise, you'll find them hard at work, buzzing from flower to flower as they gather nectar and pollinate zucchini and butternut squash. By noon, they'll be fast asleep napping on some flowers.

Most native bees are also highly independent. After a long day of flying solo from flower to flower, these busy bees retire to the nests that they dug or built themselves.



(Clockwise from top left): One Southeastern blueberry bee can help produce up to 6,000 blueberries. Squash bees like to nap on flowers. Only an estimated 471 rusty patched bumblebees remain. Up to 60,000 honeybees can live in one hive.

Honeybees

Honeybees are non-native, but they're some of the sweetest, most social pollinators. Their colonies are also filled with hard workers: In just one year, a colony can make up to 100 pounds of honey. When they're on duty, honeybees can fly to 100 flowers in a single trip—adding up to thousands of flower visits each day.

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Thanks for making it all possible

Solar storage proposal promises to power 250,000 Virginia homes

For thousands of Virginians, a home powered entirely by solar is just around the corner.

On Sept. 16, Dominion Energy proposed solar and storage projects that could power more than 250,000 Virginia homes. The proposal includes 11 utility-scale solar projects and several solar storage projects, as well as

U.S. Department of Agriculture via Flickr, CC BY 2.0



Energy storage systems can capture excess wind and solar energy and make it available around the clock, including after extreme weather events.

32 solar projects operated by third-party providers. The plan would bring Virginia closer to reaching its clean energy commitments outlined in the Virginia Clean Economy Act, including the state's commitment to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045, which Environment Virginia helped secure in 2020.

"Virginia already has enough technical solar potential to meet all of the state's 2020 electricity consumption," said Elly Boehmer, Environment Virginia state director. "Dominion's proposed solar projects will help Virginia break free from fossil fuels and get more of its energy from renewable sources like the sun."

A big win for the environment: Fairfax County approves single-use plastic bag fee

Fairfax leaders have chosen to put the planet over plastic.

On Sept. 17, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted to approve a plastic bag fee for Virginia's most populous county.

Fairfax County is just the second locality in Virginia to take action on plastic bags after

the Roanoke City Council approved the measure in May.

"By approving this bill, Fairfax County has recognized what most Virginians already know: A lot of waste comes from things we don't need and know we shouldn't use, including single-use plastic bags," said Elly Boehmer, Environment Virginia state director. "Nothing we use for five minutes should pollute our planet for generations to come."

The tide is turning on plastics nationwide. A growing number of states are passing legislation designed to reduce waste and ban plastic pollution, as documented in a recent report, "Trash In America," released by our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center.

Victory: Biden administration restores three monuments' protections

When the previous administration shrank the size of two national monuments by up to 85% and weakened protections for a third, more than 436,000 supporters of Environment Virginia and our national network objected.

On Oct. 7, the Biden administration responded by restoring Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante and the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monuments.

This action restores protections for the monuments' wildlife, ecological integrity and more than 100,000 archaeologically significant objects.

"Our country has a long history of ensuring 'America the Beautiful' exists for generations to come," said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network's Conservation America campaign. "Now we can rest assured that these treasured areas will remain a part of that lasting legacy."

Not only did our network supply hundreds of thousands of emails and comments in support of the monuments, but our staff also met with Department of Interior officials and organized a "Meet the Monuments" webinar to raise public awareness.

Get more updates on our work online at <http://environmentvirginia.org>.



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After eight-hour workdays, honeybees go to rest with up to 60,000 family members.

The rusty patched bumblebee

There's only one type of native bee that is truly social: bumblebees. And under the bumblebee umbrella is the rusty patched bumblebee. Known for their rust-colored backs, they made headlines after becoming the first bee in the continental United States to land on the endangered species list. Now, only an estimated 471 remain.

These bumblebees won't be last to be listed as endangered if we don't act. The worst threats facing bees today?

Climate change: As temperatures rise, flowers bloom earlier, which creates a mismatch in timing between when flowers produce pollen and when bees can feed on that pollen.

Habitat loss: As climate change and human development make bee habitat unlivable, bees have fewer flowers to forage and nowhere to lay eggs or raise their young.

Bee-killing pesticides: A pervasive, dangerous class of bee-killing pesticides called neonicotinoids poisons baby bees' brains, disrupts bees' sleep, alters foraging, and diminishes bees' ability to reproduce.

Bees are in crisis. And with native bees pollinating 80% of Earth's flowering plants, losing bees could be the first domino in a chain of extinctions. So we're working to ban the worst bee-killing pesticides, restore bee habitat, and get Amazon to protect bees.

As of Oct. 1, more than 47,000 supporters of our national network have urged Amazon to stop selling bee-killing pesticides. If you haven't already, you can call on Amazon too by going to this link and adding your name: <http://environmentvirginia.org/savebees>

Our canvassers have gone door to door rallying supporters like you to call on Amazon to stop selling bee-killing pesticides.



Staff



Kimball Nelson

Thanks to you, this fall we've been able to protect our wildlife and wild places while improving our chances at achieving that cleaner, greener future we all want. In this issue, you'll learn more about the critical campaigns you've helped and the causes you've advanced. Thanks for making it all possible.

Elly Boehmer
State Director

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P.O. Box 23159
Richmond, VA 23223
(804) 716-7032

Environment Virginia

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Your Winter Report

Our mission:

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Virginia, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus exclusively on protecting Virginia's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Lawsuit filed to protect polar bears in Alaska

Polar bears roam throughout the northern part of Alaska, on land and at sea, and far beyond their denning habitat in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

On Sept. 16, our national partners at Environment America joined the law firm Trustees for Alaska and other environmental groups in filing a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect polar bears from oil and gas drilling. Our lawsuit challenges a regulation that would allow oil and gas companies to undertake drilling

and exploration activities that would harm the threatened polar bears in the Beaufort Sea and on the North Slope.

"Polar bears are already struggling simply to survive," said Steve Blackledge, our national network's senior conservation program director. "When new oil drilling proposals further threaten these magnificent animals, it's critical that we hold federal agencies accountable to the laws intended to ensure their survival. Extinction, after all, can't be rectified."

Our Conservation team hopes that the courts will find that the regulation doesn't offer sufficient protection for polar bears, forcing the agency to issue a new rule that is far more protective of polar bears.

Across the country, supporters submitted photo petitions in support of protecting the Arctic and its polar bear population.



Photos courtesy of Environment America supporters