



Your Fall Report

Why wild bees need our help the most

By Steve Blackledge, director of our national conservation program

Our members know that bees are indispensable pollinators, vital to the health of wild flowering plants and food crops alike. But “bee” is a big category—holding everything from buzzing hives of honeybees, to round fuzzy bumblebees, to metallic blue mason bees, and more.

So we know that saving the bees is important. But which bees need our protection, and how can we help them?

Most people think of one species

The first animal many of us think of when we think “bee” is the European honeybee, also known as the western honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. These black-and-yellow striped insects live in densely populated hives that turn pollen and nectar into the honey you buy at the farmer’s market or grocery store.

The western honeybee is common in the U.S. because it is the species most frequently kept by beekeepers. Domestic honeybee hives are important pollinators of some specific crops, including almonds and lemons, but they are not native to America. These bees were imported here from Europe in the 17th century and have worked as partners to humans in agriculture ever since.

But there are thousands of species of wild bees

Honeybees are far from the only species of bee here. There are over 4,000 species of native bee that lived in America before



Environment America’s Steve Blackledge huddles with staff during our D.C. lobby day to advocate for America’s wildlife.

the honeybee arrived and that still live here today.

Our native bee species are a magnificent kaleidoscope of diversity. They range from less than 2 millimeters in length (the world’s smallest bee, *Perdita minima*), to over an inch in size (the shiny black common carpenter bee, *Xylocopa virginica*), and everywhere in between. Their colors range from the familiar black and yellow to the magnificent blue of the orchard mason bee, *Osmia lignaria*.

Continued on page 3 ►

Thanks
for making it
all possible

Why we don't need to mine the deep seas

A recent report released on June 18, co-authored by Environment America Research & Policy Center and our research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund and Frontier Group, outlines how seabed mining would be not only hazardous, but unnecessary.

Deep-sea mining would irreparably alter hundreds or thousands of square miles of

In March 2024, the EPA adopted new rules that will drastically reduce soot pollution from the average car by 95%. The rules are also expected to save Americans \$6,000 over the lifetime of a new car or light truck.

"In 2024, it's possible to power more cars, buses, and even pickup trucks with clean electricity," said Lisa Frank, Environment America's executive director. "A brighter future without dirty tailpipes is within reach."

Environment Georgia and our national network are working for a future free of dirty tailpipes. We're thankful to the millions of Americans who are making environmentally conscious consumer choices, as evidenced by a record of 1.4 million plug-in electric vehicles purchased in 2023.

Thanks to your action and support, we will continue to advocate for policies that help all of us get where we need to go with less air pollution.

Solar power systems celebrated in Macon, Georgia

This spring, in Macon, Georgia, a crowd gathered for an event hosted by Environment Georgia to celebrate the installation of 11 solar power systems throughout the region.

For the people of Middle Georgia, the benefits have been both environmental and financial, reducing the amount of carbon pumped into the atmosphere while saving residents money on power.

In addition to this progress, new grants will provide funding to implement more solar systems in Middle Georgia along with an Inflation Reduction Act program to fund rebates for energy efficient appliances and energy efficiency upgrades in Georgia homes.

"We are excited to help Macon and the rest of Georgia maximize the possibilities and embrace a clean energy future," said Jennette Gayer, the state director of Environment Georgia.

Environment Georgia has been calling for more solar power in the state because it would mean cleaner air and a more stable climate. These opportunities give us a path to get there.

seafloor and create plumes of sediment and mining waste that could spread even further.

We don't need deep-sea mining to transition to clean energy. The world currently discards more of some critical minerals in electronic waste each year than the annual supply expected from proposed deep-sea mining in the central Pacific over the next decade.

"Deep-sea mining would devastate ancient, slow-growing and remote ecosystems that are home to deep-sea coral, anemones, sponges and more," said Kelsey Lamp, one of the report's authors and the director of oceans campaigns at Environment America Research & Policy Center.

"Seabed mining would strip these habitats of life, introducing noise, light and pollution to places that are not equipped to handle it. We don't know if these places will ever recover from mining damage—and that loss could have consequences for marine ecosystems beyond the seafloor."

Your next new car is likely to be better for the planet

New Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules promise a brighter future with less pollution.

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmentgeorgia.org>.

NOAA



Deep-sea mining could destroy important breeding grounds for these newly discovered deep-sea octopods nicknamed "Casper," due to their likeness to the friendly cartoon ghost.

Help protect the climate
with your investments.

www.greencentury.com/divestto



Distributed by UMB Services, LLC. 11/21



Page 1 story continued:

Why wild bees need our help the most

We haven't yet discovered all the wonders our native bees have to offer. But no matter how big or how small, whether they've been discovered or not, every native bee has a job as a pollinator.

More than 700 of our native U.S. bee species are on the decline

That includes the rusty patched bumblebee, whose population plunged 90% before it was placed on the endangered species list. In order to ensure the rusty patched bumblebee's survival, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs to protect its critical habitat.

The full list of native bees that need our help is a long one. Protecting bees of all stripes is a good thing to do—but “saving the bees” doesn't mean just honeybees.

A class of pesticides called neonicotinoids (or “neonics”) is particularly devastating to all bees. Honeybees exposed to these chemicals can face uncontrollable shaking, paralysis and death. Scientists haven't di-

rectly tested the impacts of neonics on all the thousands of species of native bee in the U.S., but blue orchard bees exposed to neonicotinoids as larvae produced 20% fewer offspring than unexposed bees. Researchers also found that neonics harm baby bumblebee brains. habitat.

Another thing honeybees and wild bees share is that they need nectar and pollen to survive. Native bees are especially vulnerable to habitat loss. A healthy habitat full of flowering native plants is vital to the health of bee populations.

What you can do to save the bees

Cutting back on pesticides, protecting critical habitat and reducing carbon emissions can all go a long way to protect every kind of bee. You can help protect bees in your state by calling on your governor to support cultivating native plants and wildflowers on public lands.

For years, our staff and volunteers have been building support to save the bees. Now, 1 in 4 Americans live in a state that has restricted the use of bee-killing neonicotinoids.



Marc Olivier Le Blanc
Bee photos: Chase Danimullis via Shutterstock

Right: Common carpenter bee, *Xylocopa virginica*. Actual size.
Above left: American bumblebee, *Bombus pensylvanicus*. Actual size.

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 Georgia Citizen Lobby, a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Georgia'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.

Featured staff



Kimball Nelson

Jennette Gayer
State Director

As director, Jennette coordinates policy development, research, outreach and legislative advocacy for Environment Georgia. She has run successful campaigns to designate Georgia's first outstanding national resource water along the headwaters of the Conasauga River, expand parks along the Chattahoochee River and Jekyll Island State Park, and stop construction of three new coal-fired power plants in Georgia, while also advocating for solar policies that have helped make Georgia one of the top 10 states for solar in the country. She serves on the leadership team for the Georgia Water Coalition, and on the board of The Georgia Solar Energy Association. Jennette lives in Atlanta, where she enjoys training for triathlons and hiking and camping in Georgia's mountains.

P.O. Box 5207
Atlanta, GA 31107
(404) 370-1764

Environment Georgia

NON-PROFIT
ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BROCKTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 430

ESB Professional Via Shutterstock



Your 2024 Fall Report

Take action

Together we can advance policies that put our country and our world on a better path. To find out about the latest ways you can get involved, visit our online action center at: EnvironmentGeorgia.org/take-action.



Georgia Legislature fails to protect the Okefenokee

The Georgia state legislature closed the books on its 2023-24 session with no action to protect the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge from titanium dioxide mining.

A proposed bill would have blocked mining on Trail Ridge, the eastern boundary of the Okefenokee, beyond a small, already-proposed test mine. The proposal passed the state House but failed to pass the Senate.

This spring, Environment Georgia spoke with hundreds of Georgians about the threats facing the swamp, gathered dozens of petition signatures (on top of more than 12,000 comments Environment Georgia and our national network already collected on the draft permits for the mine), and hosted a honk-a-thon across from the Georgia Capitol building, complete with alligator costumes and handmade signs.

“Risking the beautiful Okefenokee for a mineral that can be mined elsewhere makes no sense,” said Environment Georgia’s State Director Jennette Gayer. “We are disappointed that the Georgia Legislature failed to protect this breathtaking part of our state for future generations. But other elected officials have one last chance to do the right thing: Gov. Brian Kemp should direct his Environmental Protection Division to deny draft permits and take action to permanently protect the Okefenokee from mining.”

Environment Georgia staff and volunteers built public support this spring to protect the Okefenokee.



Staff