



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*.

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Thanks
for making it
all possible

Pollution in North Carolina waterways continues to spread

The list keeps growing. Seventy new waterways were added to North Carolina's list of polluted waters.

North Carolina's waters suffer pollution from a number of sources, including sewer systems, industrial factories and slaughterhouses, which are particularly common throughout eastern North Carolina. Chemical pollution

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

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 North Carolina 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.

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

Beach Creatives via Shutterstock



Shoal Creek is one of the waterways added to North Carolina's list of polluted waters.

from these sources affects not just the quality of the water for North Carolina residents, but also disrupts the local ecosystem and wildlife.

In March, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality introduced 70 new bodies of water into their list of impaired waters for 2024. These impaired, or polluted, waters include creeks, lakes, and watersheds that you drink from, fish in and enjoy.

We need to stop the pollution of our waterways. Environment North Carolina is urging the Environmental Protection Agency to finalize slaughterhouse pollution regulations to keep the waters clean and reduce the list of impaired waterways.

Thanks to your support, we are pressuring the government to tighten up water standards and preserve North Carolina's beautiful lakes, beaches and streams.

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.

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Distributed by UMB Services, LLC. 11/21



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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 North Carolina, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting North Carolina'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

Emily Mason
Advocate

Emily advocates for cleaner air, water, clean energy and protecting wildlife and wild places in North Carolina. Emily lives in Cary, North Carolina, where she enjoys trying new recipes and kayaking.

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Your 2024 Fall Report

**“For millennia,
ancient forests
have watched over
us and sustained
us. Can we do the
same for them?”**

*Will Harlan
Center for Biological Diversity*

100,000 citizens agree: Let our most precious forests grow older

There’s nothing like walking through an old-growth forest. Magnificent oaks, black walnut, hickory, maple and birch stand like giants against the sky, while ferns, shrubs, mosses and wildflowers dot the understory.

But right now, more than 50 million acres of mature and old-growth forests on federal lands in North Carolina and across the U.S. are unprotected from logging—and timber companies are planning to log hundred-

year-old trees in the Nantahala National Forest.

Environment North Carolina campaign staff spent this summer knocking on doors, encouraging thousands of supporters and members like you to get involved in a comment period on a proposed national forest plan amendment. The United States Forest Service announced the amendment process in December, signaling a major opportunity to shift the way it will manage old-growth trees and forests.

“Our older forests are our most precious forests. These trees have been standing for longer than most people have been alive and are home to thousands of species that depend on them for food and shelter,” said Environment America’s Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery.

Our campaign staff went door to door to speak with thousands of people like you to build support for protecting our mature and old-growth forests.



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