



Photo credit Christine Beck

San Diego Pollinator Alliance

- Spring 2022 Newsletter -



George Rose/Getty Images - Monarchs overwintering in Pismo Beach, CA

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Federal and State Programs Increase Funding & Focus on Pollinators

We know how hard so many groups and organizations work to advocate for pollinators and wanted to share that these efforts have not fallen on deaf ears! Funding for pollinator habitat restoration and installation, education and outreach has been steadily increasing. See below for some of the newest funding set aside to support our friends.

- California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) approved funds for the Pollinator Habitat Program, that allots \$15 million for fiscal year 2021-22 and an additional \$15 million is proposed for fiscal year 2022-23.

Federal Funding

- In November 2021, President Biden passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which includes \$10million in funding (dispersed at \$2million per year for 5 years) for the U.S. Department of Transportation to help make roadsides more pollinator friendly. In partnership with Native American tribes and federal agencies, these funds will be used to plant native pollinator habitat and remove non-native habitat, adopt pollinator-supportive land management practices and more.
- National Institute of Food & Agriculture (NIFA) recently approved \$6 million dollars in grants to research pollinator populations. You can check out the 10 projects that were approved [here](#).

There is also a larger focus on our winged friends in the general public these days, with incentives for consumers to purchase products, produce and flowers from certified growers that are committed to running their operation in a way that protects pollinators and their habitat.

Some of these programs are the [Bee Better](#) certification from Xerces, with 14 certified suppliers and growing, and the [Bee Friendly Farming](#) certification from the national and international organization, Pollinator Partnership. Next time you're in the store, see if you can spot these stickers!



Monarch Overwintering Update

The 2021 winter counts are in, and the numbers are the highest they've been since 2016! Almost 250,000 monarchs were observed at Western migration overwintering sites. Thank you to the Xerces Society for organizing this effort, and all the citizen scientists who spend their time collecting data. [Read here for the full article.](#)

San Diego Native Milkweed Project

We are now in year 3 of the San Diego Native Milkweed Project, which is our effort to propagate milkweed native to our area and make it available for purchase at local nurseries. Local native milkweed is not commercially available now, and anything labeled "native" is grown in a different part of California. We think that seed from the local area will thrive better and be more appropriate for habitat restoration, so we set out in partnership with US Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Earth Discovery Institute and others to collect seed from wild sources and farm them in our San Diego soil.

Recently, one of our growing partners, S&S Seed Co., harvested **18lbs of narrow leaf milkweed seed** from their site in Camp Pendleton! This amount is far beyond what we expected, and we are so excited to share it with the public.

If you are a backyard enthusiast looking to plant some monarch habitat, we are happy to offer a free packet of seeds. If you are working on a larger scale restoration project, we are happy to discuss larger quantities of seed. Contact us at pollinators@rcdsandiego.org to get started!



Volunteer Opportunities

Saturday, March 26th | 9:00am – 11:30am

The Grove Park Pollinator Garden in San Marcos needs your help! They are hosting a volunteer day to do maintenance and planting in their beautiful native gardens. Tools and guidance will be provided, but please come prepared with sun protection, water and snacks.

If you are interested, please contact the site manager for more info:

Vincent Bellino - contact@restoringcalifornia.com, 760-215-2837

Education & Events

Virtual Master Gardeners Webinar | March 16th - March 27th, 2022

Each year, the Master Gardener Program of San Diego County's Spring Seminar brings outstanding gardening-related classes to residents of San Diego County. It includes a wide variety of classes on an array of gardening topics, and this year the Executive Director of the RCD of Greater San Diego, Ann Baldrige, and our colleague at Partners

For \$35.00, you have access to all pre-recorded classes for the full week. Classes can be viewed multiple times from wherever you may be. [See classes and register here.](#)

California Bumble Bee Atlas - Training Workshop **Saturday, April 2nd 10am - 12pm - San Elijo Lagoon, Carlsbad**

This Spring, join a community science collaboration between CDFW and The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation to find out more about California's native bumble bees while collecting data to help conserve declining species. California is home to half of the bumble bee species found in North America, but there has never been a systematic survey of these important pollinators of wild and crop plants. At least 1/4 of the state's native bumble bees are now imperiled, and some have been proposed for state or federal Endangered Species Act listing.

The California Bumble Bee Atlas will give volunteers the opportunity to learn about the ecology and habitat needs of some of the state's native bees, and they will also make real contributions to scientific efforts to monitor and conserve these important insects.

[Get more info and register for the training here.](#)

Western Monarch Mystery Challenge

The Western Monarch Mystery Challenge is a community science campaign running February 14th through April 22nd 2022, formed by researchers from Washington State University, Tufts University, UC Santa Cruz, and the Xerces Society to learn more about monarchs in order to inform urgent conservation efforts. [Watch the presentation here](#) to learn more.

How to participate:

1. If you see a monarch outside of overwintering groves, take a picture! (Don't worry, it can be far away and blurry).
2. Report it through the following options and be sure to **include date and location**:
 1. [iNaturalist](#) (the app is free)
 2. [Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper](#) OR
 3. Email it to MonarchMystery@wsu.edu

BONUS: You'll be entered to win a \$50 REI gift card every week you report a sighting!



Spring Events at the Water Conservation Garden

Saturday, May 7th 9am-3pm

The Butterfly Spring Fling

The Garden is overjoyed to kick off the Butterfly Season with an event to remember! Ms. Smarty – Plants™ will be hosting her famous Pollinator Party and a story time, while vendor booths, crafts and workshops take place throughout the grounds. Tickets: \$5 members; \$10 non- members; children 3 & under FREE *Butterfly releases and Landscape designs will require a separately pre-purchased ticket through www.thegarden.org.

Saturdays in May & June 9:30-11:30am

Butterfly Experiences

Release your very own butterfly to nectar on nearby flowers at the beautiful Dorcas Utter

Butterfly Pavilion and native Habitat Garden. [See here for more info!](#)



Read up on Monarch Joint Venture's [2021 Monarch Research Review](#)! This free resource is a compilation of key takeaways from the latest scientific literature about monarchs and their habitat.

Xerces Habitat Kits Available!

Xerces launched the Habitat Kit program in California in 2019, offering habitat kits that contain climate-smart native plants to project partners who are willing to provide the time, labor, and land. They are able to offer them again this year, so if you'd like to participate in the Habitat Kit program this year, please visit the [California Habitat Kit webpage](#), and then fill out the habitat kit [interest form](#) by **April 15th, 2022**.

- Large scale restoration projects on public lands, tribal lands, or working lands in the Central Valley, Sierra Nevada Foothills, Central Coast and Coastal Foothills, or Southern California.
- Participants must be able to use the entire kit or minimum order in one project, but it can be divided up within the area. For example, several plantings within one county park, or several areas on a farm or ranch.
- ****The kits are not intended to be used in home gardens.****

Pollinator Resources

- If you or someone you know is interested in planting a pollinator garden, our [Pollinator Toolkit](#) is a great resource to share!
- Now is a great time to start planting natives to support our pollinator friends. [Here is a list of nurseries](#) to visit from the California Native Plant Society.

Sending hopes for buzzing blooms in the coming months!

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