



The Patch

Center for Pollinator Conservation
Quarterly newsletter

October 2026

Message from the Director

We continue to bring energy and teamwork to conservation from the Center for Pollinator Conservation and across the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Our work, in the field and beyond, strengthened connections and advanced science through collaboration and partnership.

As fall begins, we focus on monarch migration and tagging. The Tri-National Insect Movement Collaborative, launched this summer, uses new tracking technology and international partnerships to answer priority conservation questions. This effort expands our understanding of insect movement and builds a framework for future species tracking.

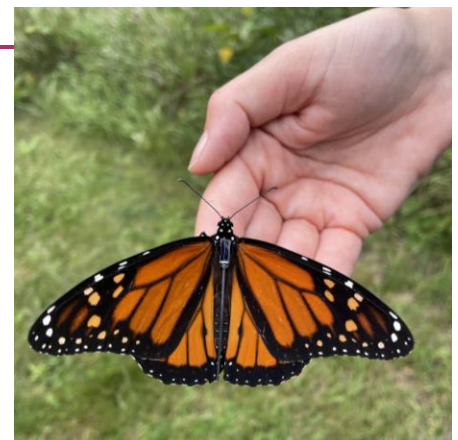
Thank you for your dedication, partnership and enthusiasm. Together, we connect communities, advance science and help monarchs and other pollinators thrive.

-Nicole Alt

Center for Pollinator Conservation Investments

Applied Science

- The Center and partners from Canada, Mexico and the U.S. launched the Tri-National Insect Movement Collaborative. The collaborative uses insect tracking technologies to answer key conservation questions. The collaborative shares data, standardizes methods and supports science-based decisions. It builds a framework for future tracking. Monarch butterflies are the starting point and will answer important questions when deployed with other pollinator species. For more information visit [Tri-National Insect Movement Collaborative](#).



Radio tagged monarch butterfly. Photo courtesy of Monarch Joint Venture.

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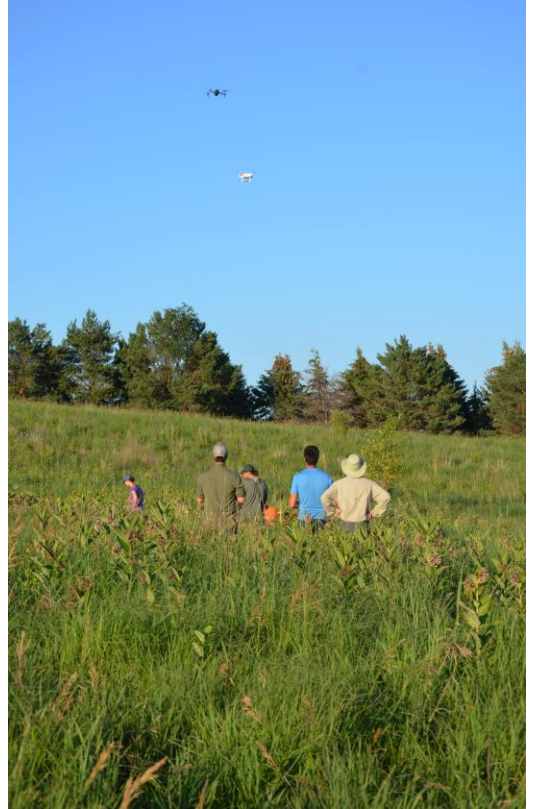
- The fall monarch migration is fully underway! You can track individual monarch's journey to overwintering sites with the Project Monarch App. The Center supports radio tag deployments at several national wildlife refuges: Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, among others. We learn new things about monarch movement every day.
- Each winter, community scientists survey western monarch overwintering sites. The Western Monarch Count tracks population's status and changing conditions at coastal groves. The Center is investing in this work by supporting coordination, training, surveys and data management as thousands of volunteer observations turn into actionable science.
- [Bumble bees also are benefitting from new radio-tagging technologies.](#) A growing community is testing these ways to track bee movement, find nesting sites and understand habitat use and conservation impacts. The Center plans to amplify these collaborations in 2027.
- Over the past two years, the Center supported Iowa State University in surveying vegetation in Minnesota and Iowa remnant and reconstructed grasslands to guide conservation management decisions. Researchers are also evaluating conservation actions and site suitability for butterflies, focusing on regal fritillary and plant community dynamics.
- The North American Pollinator Conservation Social Network Analysis, with the University of Texas at Austin, received more than 40% response rate and identified more than 1,000 collaborators during data collection between January and July 2026. Respondents and collaborators include representatives from non-profit and non-governmental organizations, state and provincial agencies, federal agencies, academic institutions, local agencies, private sector groups and Tribal organizations. From responses to date, most collaboration on pollinator conservation is local with many working at multiple scales including nationally and internationally. Preliminary analysis suggests that federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service and large non-governmental organizations, including Xerces Society and Monarch Joint Venture are central hubs in the pollinator conservation network, meaning they are listed most often as collaborators. We thank respondents for their time and will share results in 2027.



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Applied Science

- The Center works with the Monarch Joint Venture to accelerate the drone-based remote sensing tools for monitoring habitat from enrolled partners of the Nationwide Candidate Conservation Agreement for Monarch Butterfly on Energy and Transportation Lands, or CCAA and other conservation programs. The project expands remote sensing, streamlines regulatory reporting and improves habitat detection. Drone surveys in Texas, a critical component of monarch breeding habitat, collected more than 7,300 images across 9 counties. These images will be used to build a training dataset of native milkweeds and associated habitat features on Texas rangelands and expand POLLI's existing milkweed model to include two new species, *Asclepias asperula* and *A. viridis*. The project expands the geographic applicability of drone-based monitoring tools and enables faster landscape-scale mapping of monarch and pollinator habitats.
- The Center, Great Lakes Pollinator Task Force, University of California Riverside and U.S. Geological Survey are launching the United States Wild Bee Monitoring Program. This platform for native bees will guide survey locations for at-risk bee species, provide protocols and offer a secure data portal for real-time monitoring. The pilot focuses on Midwest bumble bee species, with plans to expand nationwide. The Wild Bee Monitoring Program launches in 2028.



Two drones monitoring monarch habitat.
Photo courtesy of Monarch Joint Venture.

Collaboration

- In September, the Center joined commodity groups, agri-business, academic institutions and conservation organizations at the annual Farmers for Monarchs Plenary Meeting in Nebraska. Farmers for Monarchs was established more than a decade ago to bring together diverse agriculture interests, increase understanding and awareness and support increasing monarch habitat on private agriculture lands. As an active and trusted partner in this coalition, the Center provides leadership in monarch and pollinator conservation, aligning with Service priorities and coordinated landscape-scale strategies. Leaders from partner organizations said they will continue to co-lead Farmers for Monarchs and track monarch populations nationwide.
- The San Joaquin Valley Monarch Collaborative advanced coordinated conservation in priority zones for western monarch conservation. The collaborative launched a new website, welcomed new partners and completed a bulk seed purchase that lowered costs by 87%. These actions expand access to native plants, reduce barriers to habitat creation and accelerate voluntary conservation for western monarchs and other native pollinators across the San Joaquin Valley. [Learn more about the collaborative.](#)



Center for Pollinator Conservation Investments

Engagement

- The Center for Pollinator Conservation and Ecological Services program presented at the Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group meeting in New York. The Center co-led feedback sessions on the Energy Wildlife Conservation Initiative and shared perspectives on engaging new partners with energy and transportation sectors.
- In August, the Center and the Branch of National Consultations joined the Cotton Foundation's crop tour in southern Texas. The tour brought together cotton producers, agribusiness and federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Discussions were on cotton production, pesticide use and regulatory processes. Participants also explored pest management challenges through a briefing from the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation. These conversations strengthened relationships and informed conservation approaches that support pollinators and America's farmers, ranchers and producers.
- Two Tribal workshops focused on pollinator conservation and stewardship were held in Alaska and Washington State. The May workshop at the University of Alaska Fairbanks focused on developing pollinator plans, beekeeping and strengthening networks. The June workshop in Washington hosted by the L.I.G.H.T. Foundation, aimed to enhance stewardship and create opportunities for Tribal youth. Key partners included the Wildlife Conservation Society, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, Institute for American Indian Arts and other organizations. Both events fostered knowledge exchange and collaboration among Tribes and partners.
- At the American Veterinary Medical Association's 2026 Annual Convention, the Center hosted a continuing education course and butterfly excursion at the Santa Ana Zoo in California. The event introduced veterinary professionals to pollinator conservation through pollinator-friendly landscaping, responsible pest management practices, client education using a one health approach. By working with veterinarians, trusted experts with strong connections to pet owners and their communities, the Center can advance pollinator conservation while helping veterinary practices create healthier, more welcoming environments for their patients and customers.
- The Center presented at the Aquarium of the Pacific's First Wednesday's lecture series in California. The presentation focused on western monarch conservation and voluntary actions to protect overwintering monarchs. With more than 550 people participating in person and virtually, the event expanded awareness and empowered participants to help monarchs as we head into the migratory and overwintering seasons.



Center for Pollinator Conservation Investments

Inventory and Monitoring, Natural Resources Program Center

- The Joint Interagency Bee Lab welcomed students, volunteers and naturalists for the second summer to workshops and training days at Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland. Groups learned field observation and data collection techniques. In addition, the Natural History Society of Maryland returned with student volunteers to conduct field work and curate the specimen reference collection.
- For the fifth year, the Pollinator Inventory and Monitoring Team inspired young pollinator advocates at Cylburn Arboretum's Summer Nature Camp in Maryland.
- The Pollinator Inventory and Monitoring Team at American Conservation Experience technicians supporting the Southeast Region Pollinator Project. In its third year, the project surveys priority habitats in data-poor areas of the Southeast. Technicians conducting pollinator surveys at four national wildlife refuges in Louisiana have already documented new state species and expanding knowledge of pollinator diversity in this under-surveyed region.
- The Bee Lab staff attended the U.S. Geological Survey Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Center's Bee Assessment Workshop. Experts presented on the NatureServe Climate Change Vulnerability Index assessments of regional pollinator specialist species and reached consensus on rankings. These rankings will guide regional pollinator conservation decision-making.



Female *Andrena erigeniae* collected in Maryland. Photo courtesy of USGS Bee Lab.

Pollinator Community of Practice

Join our network if you work with or are interested in pollinator conservation. Share your knowledge and ideas with this community. To highlight your efforts or attend a webinar, [email the Pollinator Community of Practice chairs](#). We look forward to hearing from you and learning together!

Center for Pollinator Conservation

Conserving pollinators with you and for everyone.

