

Illinois Farmers & Pollinators



What is a pollinator?

Pollinators, such as honeybees, native bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, wasps, birds, and bats fly among flowers collecting nectar, their food source. In doing so, they pick up and transport pollen from plant to plant, enabling the fertilization of flowers and the creation of new seeds.

Illinois' state insect is the Monarch butterfly and farmers are working with people across the state of Illinois to plant 150 million additional milkweed stems by 2038.



Benefits of Pollinators & Pollinator Habitats

Pollination is vital to agriculture and the food you eat because:

- Pollinators pollinate one-third of food products and more than 80% of all plants
- Honeybee-pollinated commodities account for \$15 billion in annual U.S. agricultural production
- Cows, pigs, and chickens rely on bee-pollinated crops for their food and nutrition

Pollinator habitat is essential for ecosystem sustainability because it:

- Improves water quality by reducing sediment and nutrient runoff
- Protects soil productivity
- Creates habitat for other wildlife and promotes biodiversity

Agriculture's Success

Through education and outreach, science and research, and habitat work, Illinois agriculture has numerous successes in sustaining pollinators.

Education & Outreach

The Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) has increased public awareness of pollinators and their importance to agriculture through educational initiatives. These initiatives illustrate how Illinois farmers support and protect pollinators.

- Illinois Ag in the Classroom improves agriculture literacy, awareness, and appreciation
- FarmWeek news and RFD Radio Network – the most listened to source for Illinois farm and rural information
- Publication of a mowing guide and a habitat development guide for an agricultural setting to provide technical support for establishing pollinator habitats

Science & Research

Pollinator research is supported by IFB. Through funding and connecting researchers to farmers, IFB is essential to the research process.

Examples of pollinator research include:

- **Illinois Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** – reviews publications to provide guidance on the best pollinator management practices
- **Illinois Natural History Survey** – evaluates trends in milkweed population and the decline of monarch populations
- **University of Illinois** – Operates I-Pollinate, a citizen science initiative where community members across the state share pollinator observations from their backyard.



Habitat Work

Through federal conservation programs, like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), pollinators are established as a priority for conservation initiatives. While all CRP programs support wildlife, one specific CRP program, CP42 (Pollinator Habitat) is designed to restore habitats for native pollinator species. **From 2012 to 2023, the acres enrolled in the CP42 practice increased about 360 times, resulting in more than 120,000 acres of habitat across Illinois, the second highest in the nation. The map shows total CRP acres per county in 2020.**

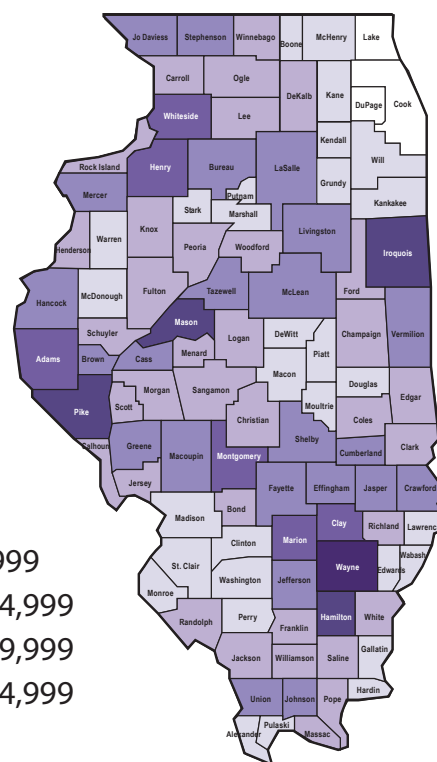
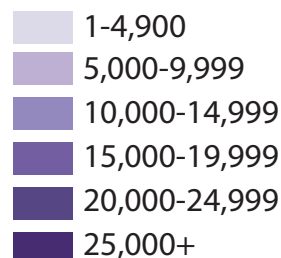
Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), along with other resources offered by NRCS and Illinois Department of Natural Resources also support pollinator habitats through sponsoring enhancement projects and providing technical assistance.

What can you do to help pollinators?

Just like farmers, here are 5 ways you can help promote pollinators in your community:

1. Plant native milkweed and prairie wildflowers where you live, work, and play
2. Adopt pollinator-friendly mowing practices
3. Follow pesticide labels, when using
4. Publicize your pollinator habitat to spread awareness and educate others
5. Join I-Pollinate and University of Illinois researchers by submitting data about pollinators

CRP (Acres)



Sources

USDA Conservation Reserve Program Statistics.
CRP Practices (Acres) By County Jan 2020.

Illinois Monarch Project: Agriculture Action Plan.

The Importance of Pollinators, USDA.

