

Tufts Pollinator Initiative

Fighting the 'Ick': Pollinators



By: Dahlia Edwards

The 'Ick'

What do you know about pollinators? You've encountered one before. If you've had contact with wind or water, that's a pollinator. If you've seen a bird, that's a pollinator. Some of the most well known pollinators...are bugs!

How do you feel about insects? Maybe you get a shiver down your back before you make a run for it? Or you freeze up and clench your hands wishing it'd disappear?

But a lot of what you are thinking about pollinators probably isn't even true!



Let's Debunk

"I don't want to get stung."

Being stung is unlikely if you remain calm and leave them on their own. Most pollinators are too focused on things like getting food to bother you.

"They're gross."

Pollinators can be quite cute! Butterflies have so many pretty colors and patterns. A lot of other pollinators are small and fuzzy with cool wings.

"I don't like bugs."

Do you know why you don't like bugs? Is it because you're afraid they might hurt you? Or you think they're creepy? A lot of pollinators are misunderstood. If you learn more about them, that dislike will fade into interest.

They're scary

Pollinators are so small. They are definitely more afraid of you than you are of them. As you learn more, you'll find out we are more alike than you think.

"They don't do anything."

Pollinators probably have the most important job on Earth. They help with all our food, make all kinds of plants grow, and feed other animals. They keep everything running smoothly.

Main Types Of Pollinators

Pollinators visit plants and collect pollen and nectar, allowing for new plants to be made. Without them, a lot of the things we see everyday would fall apart.



Bees

A majority of male bees will fall asleep in flowers when they are cold and, or, tired. Plus, male bees cannot sting.



Butterflies

Butterfly wings are actually clear. The colors we see are from a reflection of tiny scales.



Moths

Moths are some of the best impressionists. They have evolved to have their wings mimic other animals to scare off predators.



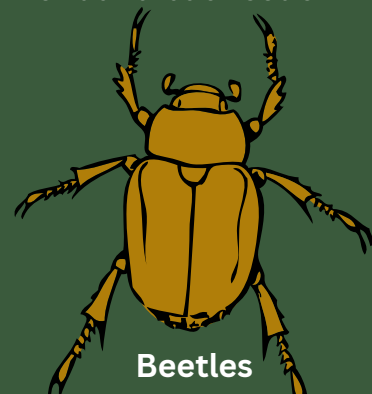
Flies

Hoverflies look like bees, but they only have front wings, whereas bees have a front and back set of wings.



Wasps

Wasps have a skinny waist so they are super flexible.



Beetles

Beetles come in a variety of sizes and colors. They are the most diverse group of any animals. There are more than 340,000 known species around the world!

Activity 1: Let's Identify

Get outside (whether that's your backyard, garden, or a park) and go pollinator watching.

Learning about pollinators up close can make them less scary. You get to find out what their names' are and what they do!

Practice make perfect!

Aim to observe for at least 10 minutes for 3 times a week.

You'll be a pro before you know it!



It can be hard to identify what pollinator you've found, since there are so many. Have a camera on hand to take pictures of the pollinators you found. Then use iNaturalist to get your pollinator identified by an expert!



Activity 2: Make A Shelter

Just like we have a home, pollinators need homes too. You can help them settle down by building homes they can move into.



Leave hollow plant stems in your garden for as long as possible. It will become a space for pollinators to lay their eggs and nest. When they're done the plants will break down.



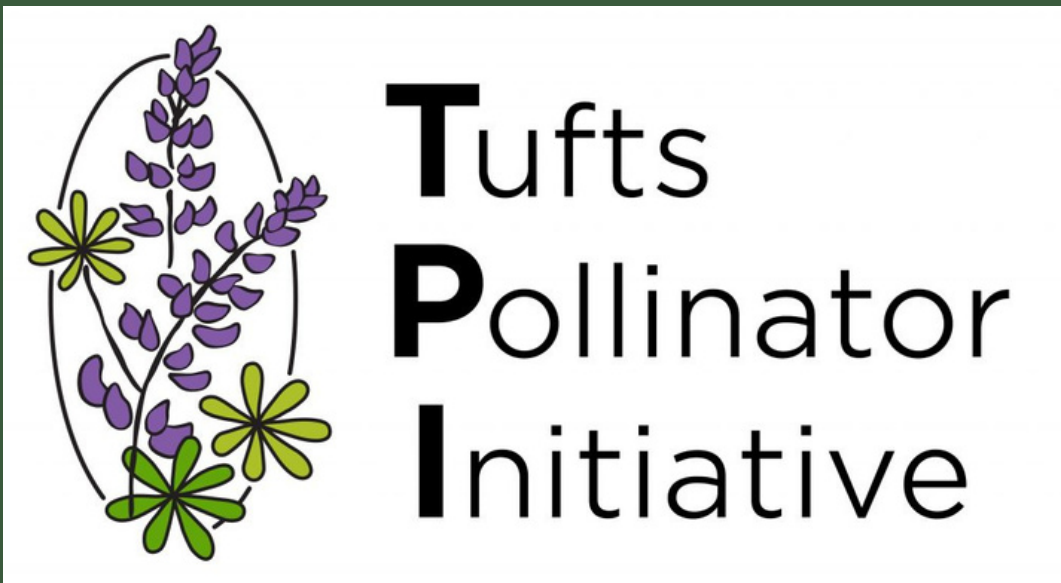
Leave any leaves and dead wood materials out instead of throwing them away. Some pollinators burrow into logs and stumps to start a family.

Give it some time and you may notice you've gained some cool neighbors.

How Do You Feel Now?

Are you less scared now? Will you be more excited the next time you see a pollinator? I hope so!

Share what you've learned with others! A lot of people don't like pollinators because they don't know much about them. Encourage people around you to get to know our tiny friends. Bring a friend with you on your next pollinator watching trip! Share this zine for them to read as well!



Check out the Tufts Pollinator Initiative for even more information and ways to get involved.

Website: <https://sites.tufts.edu/pollinators/>

Email: tuftspollinators@gmail.com

To Learn More:



Can you find all the pollinators?

