

## USDA Forest Service Botany in the News

### Pollinator Workshop Held on Ottawa National Forest

The Ottawa National Forest hosted a pollinator workshop at the Supervisor's Office in Ironwood, Michigan, on June 17, 2014. The workshop was one of two pilot trainings sponsored by the Forest Service's Eastern Region and the Pollinator Partnership, with the one-day sessions held on the Ottawa and on Missouri's Mark Twain National Forest. In recent years, scientists have observed a significant decline in pollinators, including honey bees, native bees, birds, bats, and butterflies. Many of our food crops depend on pollinators, so understanding the causes of decline and promoting pollinator habitat are vital to our ecosystems and economy.



*Figure 1. Forest Service Eastern Region Botanist Jan Schultz presents information at workshop*

The workshop included an overview of what kinds of animals provide pollination, why pollination is important to plants, and why pollination is important to people. Pollinator-friendly practices and opportunities to enhance pollinator populations and habitats were discussed. Slides were shown illustrating successful planting and pollinator enhancement projects on various land ownerships.

The afternoon included discussion of bumblebee (genus *Bombus*) identification and using bumblebees for monitoring habitat and pollinator health. Attendees headed outside to practice netting and capturing bees in "insect dorms". Several species were quickly caught, identified and released.



*Figure 2. Pollinator Partnership's Biologist Robinson Sudan oversees netting practice*

Workshop participants included Forest Service biologists, native plant proponents, faith-based organization gardeners, nature center staff, tribal natural resources program representatives, and others.

Steve Kickert, Ottawa National Forest Conservation Education Coordinator and workshop participant stated, “The workshop provided valuable insights about the role pollinators play and the threats they face. We can now take this information to the teachers and students we work with.”

Kickert also reported the workshop “was particularly useful in that it went beyond information and suggested ways in which citizen scientists can become actively involved in monitoring and managing pollinators.”



*Figure 3. Attendee Nicole Shutt examines captured bee*

Participants received a folder with pollinator identification and management materials. Participants also were treated to snacks made possible by pollinators: chocolate and almonds. Most participants also were able to take a net or “insect dorm” back to their agency for use in future insect monitoring.

Pre- and post-training assessments were conducted and will be used to improve workshops planned for 2015 on the Monongahela and Huron-Manistee National Forests. Preparation for the workshop began over a year ago, and included work by Pollinator Partnership’s Mary Byrne, Robinson Sudan, Jennifer Tsang and Kelly Rourke, and the Forest Service’s Jan Schultz (Eastern Region), Daniel Jordan (Mark Twain NF) and Sue Trull (Ottawa NF).

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