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30 Days of Celebrating National Pollinator Month: A Case Study

Abstract

Pollinators are essential for not only the pollination of about 75% of the food we consume, but for flowering plants to reproduce, preventing soil erosion, enhancing soil vigor, and improving biodiversity. According to Pollinator Partnership (2022), pollination services are provided to over 180,000 different plant species and more than 1,200 crops. It is estimated that pollinators add \$217 billion to the global economy. With the importance of pollinators, the Douglas County (Nevada) Extension Office led efforts to celebrate National Pollinator Month through a variety of events and activities, social media campaigns, and community partnerships.

Keywords: *Pollinators, National Pollinator Month, Social Media, Facebook*

Introduction

Nevada is the most arid state in the country, receiving an average annual precipitation of 10 inches. Prolonged drought continues to impact water availability and what can be grown in our region. The Extension Office in Douglas County has two primary goals

about pollinators: 1) obtain a Bee City designation; and 2) create a movement in the county to turn some of the maintained lawn spaces, which are expensive to maintain and use large quantities of water, into low-intensity native pollinator habitat. Realizing these goals will not happen overnight, we set the foundation for long-term impact with the intent of a month-long celebration of National Pollinator Month in June 2022 to create awareness about the importance of pollinators in our communities, and action steps people can take at home to attract pollinators.

Methods

The planning for a month-long celebration of pollinators began two months before the event. This was a completely new event and targeted education and outreach. Additionally, we hosted a logo contest before the event and had four youths submit logo ideas. The top two were used on promotional items including marketing materials, clothing items, and postcards.



Figure 1: The winning logo (orange bee) was chosen by the most votes by the planning committee. It was slightly digitally altered to be printed on t-shirts.

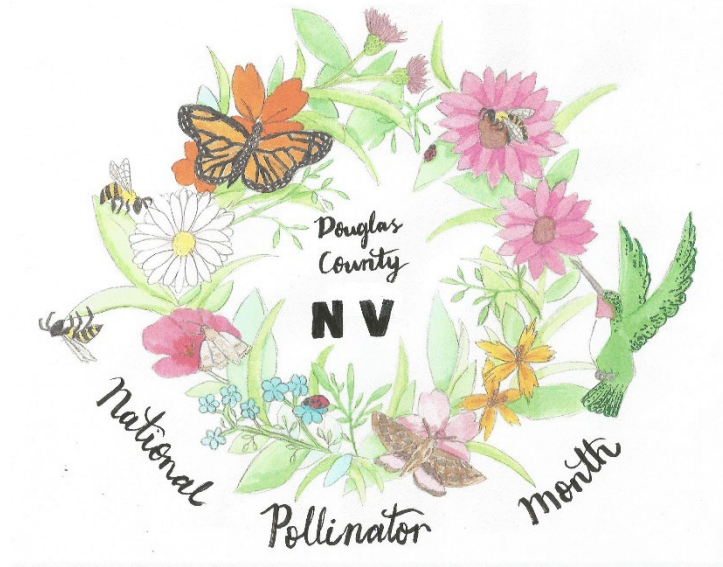


Figure 2: The second-place pollinator and flower logo was beautifully done, but unfortunately had too many colors to be eligible for shirt printing. Instead, it was used on postcards.

We determined what we would be doing throughout June so that a calendar of events could be created. Additionally, we knew that we would be doing a combination of in-person events and engagement on social media, specifically Facebook, which would allow us to increase communication with diverse clientele under the constraints of limited resources (Mangiafico, 2012). With the assistance of volunteers and partners from other agencies, numerous events were held in person, but efforts were also made to have a focused social media presence during this time as well.

In-person events included:

- Receiving a proclamation from County Commissioners declaring June National Pollinator Month in Douglas County;
- Weekly pollinator-focused classes at the community garden (sessions included topics on *What Bee is That?*, *Pollinator Habitats*, *Protecting Pollinators*, and *Bumble Bees*);
- A hydration station at the monthly downtown wine walk event to provide information about pollinators;

- A float in a county parade that happens to be held every June;
- Pollinator Lego challenge at public libraries;
- Static pollinator display at a public library;
- Pollinator story time at the public library;
- Xerces Kids and the Incredible Invertebrates challenge at public libraries;
- Pollinator BINGO hike;
- Movie showing of “My Garden of 1000 Bees”- PBS Nature Program;
- Products from the hive class (included making lotion bars, lip balm, and beeswax luminaries);
- Encaustic art class (had to cancel due to low attendance); and
- An evening with the pollinators (culminating event) at a local public park – included a walk in the flower garden, an observational beehive, honey tasting, making solitary bee habitats, face painting, and a bring-your-own-food picnic).



Figure 3: Our float theme was pollinators and we handed out honey sticks along the parade route.

Focused social media (Facebook) included:

- Highlighting a pollinator-friendly plant daily (30 days);
- Weed of the week;
- Pest of the week;
- All events and activities; and
- Sharing partner agency posts as appropriate.

Collaborations with other county agencies were instrumental to the overall success of our efforts. Partnering agencies included the Douglas County Public Libraries, The Nature Conservancy – River Fork Ranch, Heritage Park Gardens, Main Street Gardnerville, the Carson Valley United Methodist Church, and families in the Douglas County Bee and Pollinator Club.

Results and Discussion

Overall, our celebration of National Pollinator Month was extremely successful. The successes of the in-person events included: the proclamation, the monthly classes at the community garden, the parade float, the BINGO hike, the movie viewing, and the evening with pollinators. Next year we will move some of the public library activities to May to create excitement early and showcase items during June. The things we tried that did not fit during National Pollinator Month included the hydration station during the wine walk. People were more interested in drinking wine and less interested in pollinators. Our two classes were not as popular as we had hoped. We are unsure if the classes' times and/or dates were bad, or if the \$40 cost was off-putting. We will need to determine how to best offer these in the future. Additionally, there was very little interest in the Xerces Kids and the Incredible Invertebrates challenge. We may move this to May to help create an early interest in the future.



Figure 4: Products from the hive class included lotion bars (in the tin), a beeswax luminary, soap, and lip balm.

Regarding the focused social media efforts during June 1-30, our Extension Facebook page (@UNRExtensionDouglas) reach was 1,520, up 38.7%; page visits were 110, up 254.8%; and there were 14 new page likes, up 75%. Posts, specifically the daily feature of a pollinator-friendly plant, were scheduled in advance to make it as easy as possible to have a consistent presence.

Table 1 shows the engagement around the three major focuses during National Pollinator Month. Events and activities reached a lot of people, but the consistency of the daily pollinator plant resulted in more overall engagement with persons during the month.

Table 1: Facebook results of National Pollinator Month posts, June 1-30, 2022.

	30 days of pollinator plants	Weed or pest of the week	Events and activities
Reach	2574	142	10,571
Engagements	218	3	144
Likes and reactions	156	1	80
Comments	5	0	3
Shares	17	0	6

Conclusions

Overall, celebrating National Pollinator Month in Douglas County Nevada was a success. Not only did we achieve the goal of beginning to create community awareness about pollinators, but through our efforts, we are seeing an increase in interest and requests for pollinator-focused teaching and outreach. The combination of the in-person events, establishing event partners and being consistent with our Facebook posts resulted in reaching more people than we could have just used one of the methods. We were successfully able to expand the impact of our programming, share educational information, improve communication, and market our Extension programs (Mains et al., 2013). Both in-person and online serve a purpose and ultimately share the good work Extension professionals are doing. We estimate that the in-person events reached 250 people directly, and 1000 indirectly. Additionally, 65 horticulture factsheets were distributed at the Heritage Park Garden Talks.

Through an event debrief, we recognized an entire month of events is a huge commitment, and that it may be too much with other demands of the job. We have discussed focusing efforts into a week (National Pollinator Week) instead and leading

with more events in May to shift the workload a bit. Stokes et al. (2021) discussed a Pollinator Appreciation Day, which utilizes multiple agencies to provide outreach and teaching to the community. This concept is great and will also be explored, and we will expand overall program evaluation to identify medium-term impacts.

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