

Bee City USA - Rapid City

Report on 2023

Pollinator Habitat Creation & Enhancement

Please describe pollinator habitat creation or enhancement projects in your community in 2023, and whether your committee hosted them or not.

Parks and Recreation created two new pollinator habitat areas this year. One is an area of turf grass which maintenance staff tilled up and overseeded with a pollinator-friendly grass and wildflower mix. The area is about 4,700 sq. ft. A habitat sign was posted to give notice to curious passersby. The idea came from a staff member due to its proximity to a newly created bee hive enclosure which was built for the use of a local chapter of Hives for Heroes. This organization's goal is to provide enriching camaraderie to veterans by teaching them how to keep honeybees. Two hives were set up in a park and a few times per month, the leader and the students would gather to talk about caring for honeybee colonies. The pollinator plot was planted a few hundred feet away to assist their bees with foraging opportunities. The other new habitat area is an underutilized parcel adjacent to Canyon Lake Park. The impetus for developing the site came from a family who wanted to honor their late mother, who lived in and loved the neighborhood. They requested a walking path, a memorial bench, and whichever plants would suit the area. An irrigation ditch runs through the property, acting as a water source for invertebrates, birds, and mammals. Ten new trees have been planted on the property, all of which were chosen for suitability and value to pollinators and/or wildlife. An irrigation system was also added to support these plantings. In 2024, Parks will be planting garden beds filled with native or well adapted plants and creating a wildflower and non-turf grass area in the same manner as described in the previous paragraph. The pollinator demonstration garden in front of City Hall was also enhanced this year. Committee member Lysann purchased and planted 13 new native plant specimen: eastern pasque, prairie smoke, smooth blue aster (2), candle anemone, hoary verbena, partridge pea, blue giant hyssop, prairie blazing star, groundplum milkvetch, wild columbine, western pearly everlasting, and prairie spiderwort. These were raised by the South Dakota State University Native Plant Institute which is a new research and advocacy venture within the past 5 years. They held 3-4 native plant sales throughout the state. A Master Gardener also provided Lysann guidance on splitting plants, slightly reworking the layout, and creating an educational handout which will be a future project.

How many habitat projects did you help to create or enhance in 2023?

3

How many people (staff, volunteers, students, partners, etc.) helped with those projects?

10

How many projects benefit monarchs, milkweed, or nectar plantings?

How many total square feet of habitat were created or enhanced?

5295

Please check all that describe the habitats your affiliate helped to create or enhance in 2023 with pollinator benefit in mind.

- Flower garden
- Natural area with tree snags and stumps, and bare areas for ground nesting species
- Pollinator-friendly lawn (with flowering clover, dandelions...)
- Native pollinator-friendly tree planting



New pollinator habitat after fewer than 6 months of growth (Credit: Lysann Zeller)



Wilson Park Pollinator Plots looking cheery during the annual West Boulevard Summer Festival (Credit: Lysann Zeller)



Prairie smoke seedling newly planted in the City Hall Demonstration Garden (Credit: Lysann Zeller)

Education & Outreach

Please describe pollinator conservation events or outreach activities in your community in 2023, indicating whether your committee hosted them or not.

The five pollinator conservation outreach events in 2023 consisted of tabling at other organizations' community events. In March 2023, Sustainability Committee members – one of whom also sits on the Bee City USA/Urban Wildlife Committee – hosted a table at the Black Hills Home Builders Association Home Show. They handed out free pollinator habitat seed packets. Attendance at this multi-day exposition could be in the range of 2,000-3,000. We hosted a table

at an Earth Day event on April 22, 2023. This event was held at Western Dakota Technical College and included a geothermal greenhouse tour, various speakers and demonstrations, and an exhibit hall filled with a multitude of environmental organizations, businesses, and government entities. Attendance was approximately 800 people. The Parks and Recreation table included information relating to pollinators, pesticides, and habitat. People were excited to pick up bookmarks which held a piece of plantable seed paper in the shape of a watering can. Our third pollinator event was held during the celebration of Pollinator Week. On June 24, 2023, our committee hosted a pollinator education booth at the Black Hills Farmers Market. The booth featured a pollinator-themed prize giveaway for those who stopped to talk with us, free packets of pollinator habitat and forage seeds, kids' activities like temporary tattoos, coloring pages, a butterfly craft using coffee filters, clothespins, markers and water, and information on native plant species and the importance of pollinators. Turnout was decent until it started raining. We were encouraged that many people (maybe 120) stopped to ask questions, talk about their gardens, and get information about how to better advocate for pollinators. A fourth event was the Youth and Family Services Harvest Festival on September 16, 2023. This was a fall festival with the aim of promoting various strategies for healthy living to families with children. Organizers estimated that 700 children and adults attended. Our main angle was teaching kids how vital pollination is in our food system. The table was decorated with a display of some of the most popular produce which is created with pollinators' help – apple, avocado, banana, tomato, pumpkin, coffee, chocolate, blueberry, almond, etc. Our booth proved to be quite popular because of an activity which we guided kids (and adults!) through. Step one was creating a bee finger puppet out of pipe cleaners. Step two was demonstrating how if the bee landed on a (paper) flower to feed, it could pick up pollen (cheese powder sprinkled in the center) with its hairy legs or body and that if it flew to a different (paper) flower, some of the pollen would get transferred. Tons of families found our table and said “this is where they’re coming from! Can we make a bee puppet?” The final event was Family Night Out on October 4, 2023. This was organized by the City of Rapid City to attract citizens downtown for a free night of fun and to offer an activity for the South Dakota Municipal League Conference attendees which was held in Rapid City that week. A downtown street adjacent to Main Street Square was closed off and city departments, committees and community organizations were invited to table. A free concert was held in Main Street Square later in the evening. The Rapid City Sustainability Committee hosted a booth at the event and distributed pollinator information. Due to unforeseen circumstances, attendance was about 50 people.

How many pollinator-related events or outreach activities did you host or help with in 2023 (in total)?

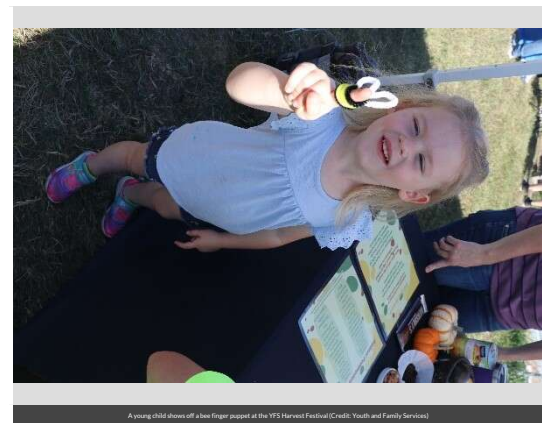
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How many people attended those events (in total)?

1370

How many Bee City USA logo street signs have you installed to date (in total)?

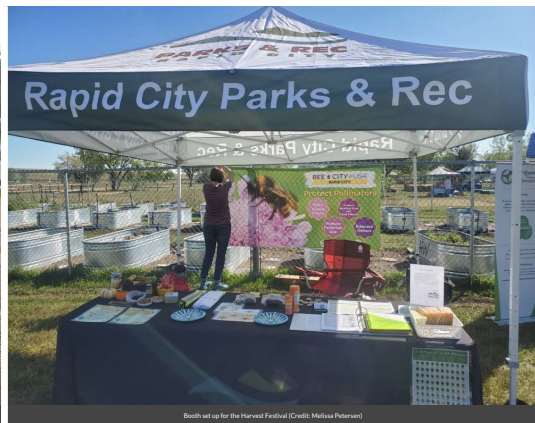
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A young child shows off a bee finger puppet at the YFS Harvest Festival (Credit: Youth and Family Services)



A group of children make a butterfly craft project at the Pollinator Week Celebration at the farmers market (Credit: Lyanna Zeller)



Booth set up for the Harvest Festival (Credit: Melissa Petersen)



Bee City USA street sign with iconic Dinosaur Park in the background (Credit: Melissa Petersen)

Policies & Practices

Please describe actions taken to make pest management more pollinator-friendly.

This is an area where we would like to be more proactive in the future. Parks staff have been avoiding the use of

pesticides in designated pollinator habitats in the parks. An Integrated Pest Management Plan is still in draft form but it is our intent to make progress on it in 2024 and take it to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for adoption before next year's growing season begins.

In your city or campus, are any policy initiatives underway to further protect pollinators, people or waterways from pesticides?

None at this time. Initiatives of this type will likely come as we develop the Integrated Pest Management Plan for Rapid City Parks and Recreation.

Did your committee participate in any continuing education on ecologically-based Integrated Pest Management planning?

Melissa, the City liaison, attended a No Mow May webinar in March 2023. The session touched on how no mow/low mow strategies could reduce the need for pesticides by suppressing tick and mite populations and how by reducing the stress on the grasses, weeds may be less likely to pop up.

Please check actions you have taken to make pest management practices more pollinator-friendly.

- Avoided use of pesticides in public sites containing designated pollinator habitat or other sensitive features (except when targeted use is deemed the best option for invasive or noxious weed, insect or disease management)

Are efforts underway in your community to further reduce pesticide use in residential or business areas? This may include neighborhood-led efforts, outreach to landscapers, etc. If so, please describe.

No, nothing we are aware of. The Rapid City Sustainability Committee's website (rapidcitysustainability.com) provides introductory information on a variety of environmental issues and links to research, associated organizations, etc. You can find mentions of sustainability in landscaping – use native plants, harvest rainwater, reduce pesticide use, leave the leaves, etc.

Any lessons learned you would like to share?

The Sustainability Committee organized a trip to Fort Collins, CO in June where we were impressed by the sustainability features built into every part of their community. They had a pollinator demonstration garden outside their City Hall and at The Gardens on Spring Creek. There were many instances where we felt way behind their efforts but surprisingly, we were able to introduce some of their staff to the existence of the Bee City USA program. On a similar note, we were excited to see Spearfish, SD become a Bee City this year as they are only about 45 miles away from Rapid City. Clearly the word is also spreading inside our town as students from South Dakota School of Mines and Technology reached out in February to invite us to sit on their pollinator committee and possibly apply for the Bee Campus program!

Learn More

Integrated Pest Management Plan: [Rapid City IPM Plan_Feb 2024 Draft.pdf](#)

Recommended Native Plant List:

<https://www.pollinator.org/pollinator.org/assets/generalFiles/BlackHills.2020.ver2.pdf>

Recommended Native Plant Supplier List: [Recommended Native Plant Supplier List for Rapid City.pdf](#)