Bee Campus USA - University of New Mexico-Taos

Report on 2024

Pollinator Habitat Creation & Enhancement

Please describe pollinator habitat creation or enhancement projects in your community in 2024, and whether your committee hosted them or not.

UNM-Taos, in collaboration with the Native Plant Society and dedicated volunteers, worked to create and enhance pollinator-friendly habitats across campus. A significant milestone in these efforts was the establishment of a Native Plant & Pollinator Garden, designed to provide essential forage and shelter for pollinators while integrating educational opportunities for the campus and broader community. In June 2024, a planting day brought together UNM-Taos staff, volunteers, and community partners to introduce more than 100 native plants into the newly designated garden space. Generous donations from High Country Gardens and the Native Plant Society Taos Chapter made it possible to establish a thriving habitat filled with Gaillardia, Penstemon, Echinacea, Monarda, and other pollinator-friendly species. These plants were selected for their ability to support a wide range of pollinators, from bees and butterflies to hummingbirds. In addition to flowering plants, trees were planted to provide shade, wind protection, and early spring blossoms, ensuring that pollinators can access resources in early spring when sustenance at our campus is scarce. Beyond plantings, the project also prioritized pollinator shelters. Six solitary bee houses were installed at the Klauer and Rio Grande campuses, offering nesting sites for native bees, which are critical for local ecosystems. Recognizing the role of diverse pollinators, bat houses were installed to support nocturnal pollinators and insect control efforts. Additionally, two finch houses and three hummingbird houses were strategically placed across campus, encouraging the presence of avian pollinators. Water availability in the high-desert climate of northern New Mexico is a persistent challenge, and pollinators rely on consistent access to water sources. To address this, UNM-Taos installed an irrigation system to support the pollinator garden, ensuring long-term plant viability. Additionally, two natural rock water fountains were purchased and installed, blending seamlessly into the landscape while providing a safe and accessible water source for pollinators. Designed with gravel bottoms, these fountains minimize the risk of drowning for insects and small wildlife. These enhancements reflect UNM-Taos' commitment to pollinator conservation by creating a sustainable, supportive environment for local pollinators while engaging students, faculty, and community members in hands-on environmental stewardship. Looking ahead, UNM-Taos plans to continue expanding habitat spaces and integrating pollinator conservation into broader campus initiatives.

How many habitat projects did you help to create or enhance in 2024?

3

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

15

How many projects benefit monarchs, milkweed, or nectar plantings?
2

How many total square feet of habitat were created or enhanced?
2700

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

- Flower garden
- Invasive/exotic plant species removal for habitat improvement
- Native pollinator-friendly tree planting
- Native pollinator-friendly shrub border/hedgerow planting
- Other

UNM-Taos staff and volunteers planting the Pollinator & Native Plant Garden. Photo credit: Enrico Trujillo.

UNM-Taos students making native plant seed balls. Photo credit: Alejandra Villalobos.

Pollinator shelter installations included bee, bat, and bird houses. Photo credit: Enrico Trujillo.

Education & Outreach

Please describe pollinator conservation events or outreach activities in your community in 2024, indicating whether your committee hosted them or not.
In 2024, UNM-Taos hosted and participated in multiple pollinator conservation events and outreach activities,

engaging students, staff, faculty, and the broader community in education and hands-on efforts. These initiatives aimed to raise awareness of pollinators' critical role in the ecosystem while fostering community involvement in habitat preservation. Campus-Wide Events UNM-Taos Bee Campus participated in two major campus-wide events: Spring Fling in April and Fall Fest in October. These events provided opportunities for the community to learn about our college and programs. Spring Fling primarily welcomed high school students from across the region. Fall Fest served as a broader community outreach event, connecting local residents with campus initiatives. At both events, Bee Campus hosted a designated educational table, which provided: • Information on UNM-Taos' commitment to pollinator conservation and habitat enhancement • Xerces Society resources, such as "No Mow April" and "Leaves Are Not Litter" signage • A bee art project for hands-on engagement • A microscope display featuring honey bees (worker and queen bees) • A honey bee panel showcasing pollinator behavior and ecosystem impact In collaboration with the New Mexico Native Plant Society Taos Chapter, we also: • Provided educational materials on native plants • Distributed native plant seeds to promote pollinator-friendly gardening • Led a seed ball-making activity to encourage habitat restoration efforts, some of these seed balls were alter distributed along the trail to the Native Plant and Pollinator Garden. Earth Day Celebration In April, UNM-Taos hosted a campus-wide Earth Day event, featuring a public screening of My Garden of a Thousand Bees. This documentary educated attendees on pollinator diversity, behavior, and conservation strategies. Similar to Spring Fling and Fall Fest, we provided interactive activities and distributed native plant seeds to encourage pollinator-friendly planting. PreK-12 Outreach As part of our community engagement efforts, UNM-Taos hosted a field trip for Enos Garcia Elementary 5th-grade students in April. The visit included: • Pollinator education activities using both science and art-based learning • A microscope display of honey bees • A viewing of excerpts from My Garden of a Thousand Bees to reinforce pollinator conservation concepts Community & Partner Engagement UNM-Taos strengthened its pollinator-friendly initiatives through a variety of outreach efforts, including: • Launching the UNM-Taos Bee Campus Webpage (http://taos.unm.edu/community/bee-campus.html), where community members can learn about our Bee Campus efforts. • Enhancing habitat across campus by increasing the number and diversity of native plants and pollinator-friendly trees. • Partnering with other organizations made our efforts possible. The Carroll Petrie Foundation gave UNM-Taos a $30,000 grant, which provided significant tangible support for our efforts. The Native Plant Society Taos Charter was very generous with its expertise, donating plants, recruiting volunteers, helping us inventory plants across the campus, collecting and giving away seeds, participating in our campus events, and caring for other plants over winter while we had suitable planting weather. High Country Gardens was also a generous donor, giving UNM-Taos numerous plants in three donations throughout the year and highlighting our efforts in their press release. • Engaging the broader community via press releases and social media outreach. Additionally, we installed 61 plant identifier signs throughout the Native Plant & Pollinator Garden and along campus walkways to educate visitors on native plant species. We also proudly display our commitment placing three Bee Campus USA signs at key campus entry points. Looking ahead, UNM-Taos plans to install an interpretive park sign explaining the importance of native plants and pollinators. While delayed due to funding constraints, this project will be completed in 2025 with institutional support.

How many pollinator-related events or outreach activities did you host or help with in 2024 (in total)?

7

How many people attended those events (in total)?

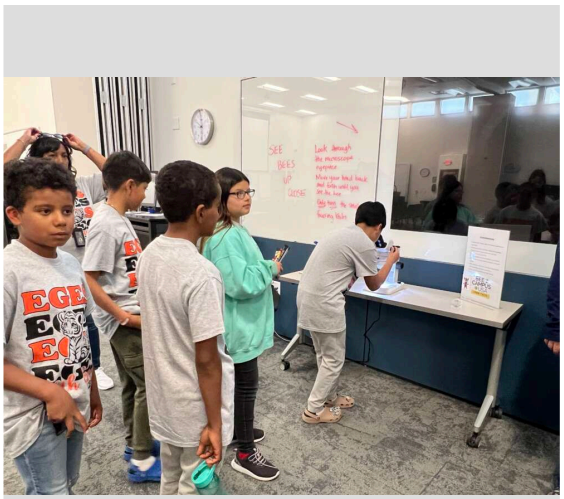
510

Number of permanent interpretive/educational/Bee Campus USA signs installed to date?

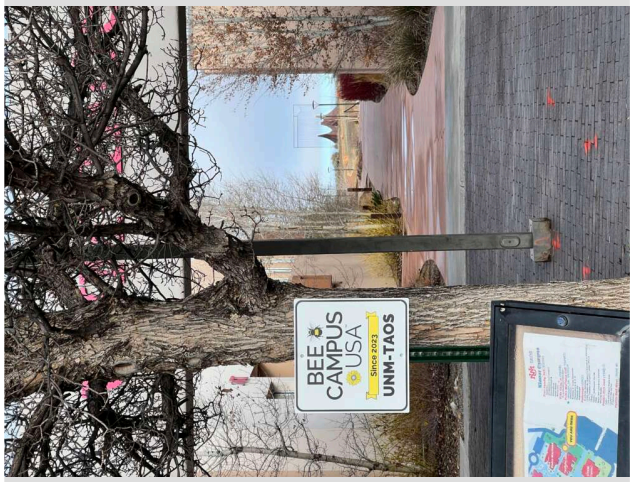
64

UNM-Taos Kids Campus (childcare) students bee artwork. Photo credit: Kids Campus/Alison McPartlon

Fifth grade students from Enos Garcia Elementary learning about pollinators. Photo credit: Alejandra Villalobos.



Students seeing bees through a microscope. Photo credit: Alejandra Villalobos.



Three signs were installed across the campus proudly displaying the Bee Campus designation. Photo credit: Alejandra Villalobos.

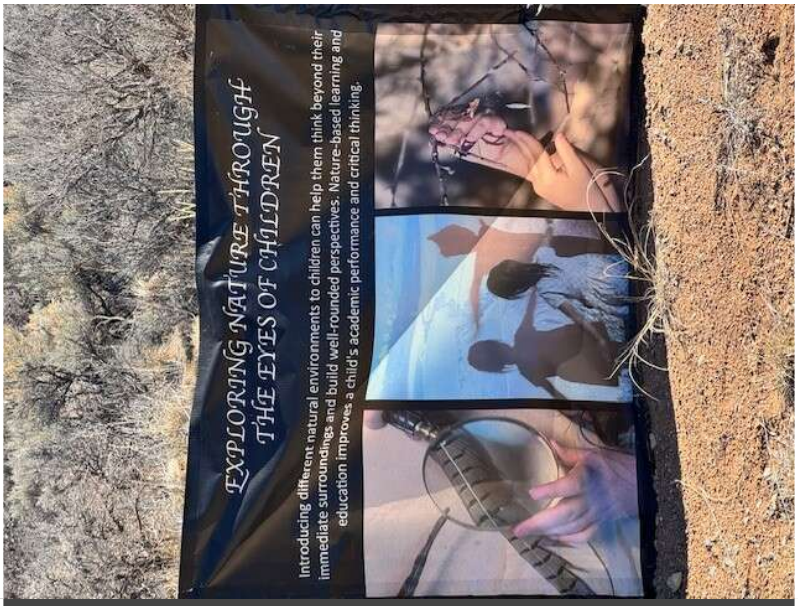
Signs help everyone who visits our campus learn about native plants. Photo credit: Enrico Trujillo.

Sixty one signs were installed across the campus labeling plants. Photo credit: Enrico Trujillo.

Curriculum, Continuing Education, & Service Learning

Please describe the curriculum your campus engaged in 2024, indicating whether it was part of a for-credit course or continuing education.

In our first year as a Bee Campus, UNM-Taos focused primarily on community and K-12 outreach rather than integrating pollinator education into the college-level curriculum. Our efforts centered on hands-on learning experiences, campus events, and local school partnerships to raise pollinator conservation awareness. However, the AS Pre-Science Program includes a Natural Resources Management track and the Northern New Mexico Climate Change Corps, incorporating pollinator-related content in several courses. Recognizing the importance of expanding pollinator education, we plan to assess existing coursework, collaborate with faculty, and explore opportunities to enhance curriculum and service-learning experiences in the coming years.



Taos Children's, ages 3 to 9, artwork displayed at Klauer campus. A collaboration project between UNM-Taos Kids Campus, INSPIRE! Bilingual Early Learning Center, Anansi Charter School and Imagine Children's Museum, sponsored by the Paso a Paso Network. Photo credit: Alejandra Villalobos.

Nature inspired art banners installed at Klauer campus, including at the trail to the Native Plant and Pollinator Garden. Photo credit: Scott Gerdes.

Policies & Practices

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

UNM-Taos is committed to sustainable and pollinator-conscious pest management practices. In alignment with the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan, approved by the college's leadership on February 20, 2024, the institution prioritizes non-chemical pest control methods to minimize environmental impact and protect pollinators. To maintain campus landscapes, UNM-Taos primarily relies on manual vegetation management, including hand-pulling weeds, mowing, and pruning to reduce pest-friendly habitats without resorting to chemical treatments. When intervention is necessary, the campus follows a least-toxic approach, using only organic or reduced-risk pesticides as a last resort and

applying them only in targeted areas to avoid affecting pollinators and other non-target species. Additionally, the IPM policy restricts pesticide use in designated pollinator habitats and sensitive ecological areas. Pest control contractors working with UNM-Taos are required to utilize the least-toxic methods and align with the campus's sustainability goals. By integrating landscape design strategies that naturally deter pests while fostering pollinator-friendly environments, UNM-Taos continues to improve its ecological stewardship. These efforts ensure that pollinators can thrive on campus while maintaining effective and responsible pest management.

In your city or campus, are any policy initiatives underway to further protect pollinators, people or waterways from pesticides?
UNM-Taos has historically utilized nature-friendly practices for all our grounds and garden care. Internal grounds-keeping efforts initiated by the Facilities Department followed those guidelines, and our primary contract, Gecko Landscaping Inc., also implemented and followed these practices as detailed in the Integrated Pest Management Plan. Additionally, UNM-Taos is planning and implementing updates to the campus lighting systems to support Dark Sky Initiatives. Through a partnership with the El Valle Astronomy Club, the club advocates for protecting ancestral skies in Taos County, which directly benefits pollinators. Furthermore, UNM-Taos strongly supports NM Senate Bill 34, which seeks to protect and preserve New Mexico's treasured dark skies.

Did your committee participate in any continuing education on ecologically-based Integrated Pest Management planning?
Yes. Our Bee Campus committee co-chair attended the Pesticides, Policy, and You Xerces Society webinar held on January 25, 2024.

Any lessons learned you would like to share?
As UNM-Taos reflects on its first year as a Bee Campus, several key lessons have emerged that will guide our continued growth in pollinator conservation efforts. Water is a Critical Resource In our high-desert, drought-stricken environment, access to water remains one of the most significant challenges for sustaining pollinator-friendly habitats. The installation of two natural rock water fountains and an irrigation system in our pollinator garden has reinforced the importance of reliable water sources for both native plants and pollinators. Future efforts will continue to prioritize water conservation strategies to ensure the long-term success of these habitats. We are looking into water catchment and earth works that can harvest more moisture when it does rain. The Need for Native Plant Diversity Our campus is surrounded by chamisa-dominated landscapes, and it lacks plant diversity to support a broad range of pollinators. Introducing native flowering plants has proven essential in enhancing biodiversity and creating sustainable food sources. Our work has highlighted the importance of thoughtful plant selection and habitat design to support pollinator populations throughout the seasons. Conservation Requires Time, Planning & Expertise Planning, securing resources, and implementing pollinator-friendly landscapes is complex and time-intensive. Each step requires considerable expertise and collaboration, from coordinating planting events to installing pollinator shelters and signage. Most of our efforts took significantly longer than expected. These efforts would not have been possible without the generosity of donors, partners, volunteers, and UNM-Taos staff, whose support has been instrumental in bringing this vision to life. Community & Campus Excitement Perhaps the most rewarding lesson has been the sense of community that pollinator

conservation has fostered. The Bee Campus designation has sparked excitement across campus and engaged students in hands-on learning, from the smallest of our students at Kids Campus, elementary, middle, and high school students from our community, to our college students. The designation has inspired local organizations and schools to explore partnerships with us and pollinator-friendly initiatives. The momentum generated this year demonstrates that pollinator conservation is not just about ecology—it is about building connections, education, and shared stewardship. As we move forward, these lessons will continue to shape our approach, ensuring that UNM-Taos remains a leader in sustainable pollinator conservation in our region.

Committee Photo

Native Plant Society Taos Chapter and Bee Campus Committee Member, Roberta Chambers, and Bee Campus Committee Co-Chairs, Catherine Brandenburg and Alejandra Villalobos (left to right). Photo credit: Alejandra Villalobos.

Learn More

Integrated Pest Management Plan: unm-taos-ipm-policy.pdf
https://taos.unm.edu/community/assets/unm-taos-ipm-policy.pdf
Recommended Native Plant List:

Recommended Native Plant Supplier List:

https://taos.unm.edu/community/bee-campus.html
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