

Introduction by USFS Chief Tidwell - Pollinators and Pollination

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These are challenging times for the Nation's public and private forests and grasslands. Invasive species, insects and disease, disrupted fire regimes and catastrophic wildfires, drought, and climate change have accelerated the urgency of restoring healthy, resilient ecosystems that provide a range of vital natural assets, goods, and services that the American people depend upon. These "ecosystem services" include, for example, biological diversity and habitats, watershed services and clean water, carbon storage, clean air, and scenic landscapes. However, there is one ecosystem service that goes quietly unnoticed and perhaps unknown to many – pollination.

Pollinators – and the ecosystem service they provide – are critical to the resilience and sustainability of our landscapes and life as we know it. In temperate ecosystems, 78.5 percent of flowering plants require an animal pollinator to successfully reproduce. Three-quarters of our global food crops depend on pollination services from wild and domestic pollinators. Our Nation's wildlands are increasingly being recognized as vital reservoirs for pollinators and the key services they provide for our Nation's food security as well as for the health and resilience of our native ecosystems.

Unfortunately, habitat loss, increased pesticide use, disease, and climate change are adversely affecting pollinators and their habitats globally. Faced with these challenges, we need to better understand, conserve, and manage pollinators and the ecosystem service they provide if we are to successfully manage, conserve, and restore our Nation's forests and grasslands.

As land managers and conservation leaders it is incumbent upon us all to become more knowledgeable about pollinators and pollination ecology. As we prepare to restore and rehabilitate native plant communities, our land management actions will need to take pollinators into account.

As Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, I am pleased to present this special issue of the *Natural Areas Journal* on pollinators and pollination. The U.S. Forest Service is dedicated to the protection, conservation, and management of pollinators and their habitats. We are delighted to sponsor this special issue and are grateful to our long-term partner, the Natural Areas Association, for highlighting this critical subject.



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