A Great Day for Pollinators at Risk

In an unprecedented move to advance a vital conservation cause, three U.S. entities collaborated on October 18 to increase attention to the importance, and potential peril, of pollinating animals and the plants which depend on them for reproduction. At the Pollinator Symposium—jointly hosted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)—the National Academy of Sciences, USDA and U.S. Postal Service each made major announcements to focus public attention on often unseen and yet vitally important interactions between plants and the pollinating animals that help them reproduce.

The goal of the Pollinator Symposium was to raise awareness and to underscore the critical need for forethought and research to prevent a crisis in the pollinator world. As part of the NAPPC Pollinator Partnership, scientific, environmental and agricultural organizations are working together to avert a global calamity by focusing on sustaining and enhancing pollinators, who in turn play a vital role in a stable food supply and in natural ecosystems.

Chuck Conner, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, announced at the Symposium that Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns signed a proclamation in recognition of pollinators and designated June 24-30, 2007, as National Pollinator Week. This action is part of a growing effort by USDA to address pollinator conservation challenges, and lays the groundwork for a national outreach campaign in 2007.

Status of Pollinators: Monitoring and Prevention of their Decline in North America, a nearly 400-page report completed by the Academies’ National Research Council (NRC) was introduced by Gene Robinson, University of Illinois professor of entomology, Academy member and member of the NRC committee formed to conduct the pollinator study.

“This study is the foundation on which all our science and policy for pollinators can be built from now on,” said Robinson. “This thorough compendium shows us not only what we know about pollinators, but also what we need to know.” The report can be found at http://www.nationalacademies.org.

In a third major development, the U.S. Postal Service unveiled the intricate design for a commemorative stamp series highlighting the interconnectedness of nature and the process of pollination.

“Farmers see the connection between plants and pollinators every day,” said Conner. “Thanks to these beautiful stamps, that same point is illustrated for everyone.” The pollination stamps will be issued during National Pollinator Week in 2007 as part of NAPPC’s planned national pollinator awareness campaign.

The Pollinator Symposium was created by the partners of NAPPC, a tri-national, public-private collaboration of scientific researchers, state and federal agencies, private industry and environmental groups dedicated to ensuring sustainable populations of pollinating animals. More information can be found at http://www.pollinator.org.

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