Carnivorous Plants and Their Pollinators

The week of June 15-21 has been designated as Pollinator Week to mark a necessary step toward addressing the urgent issue of declining pollinator and plant populations. Each year the Pollinator Partnership, along with a wide range of partners (including federal agencies, non-profits, and for-profits), design and distribute an educational pollinator poster to promote Pollinator Week. The posters are one of the most popular outreach material items offered.

This year the 2015 Pollinator Week poster <http://www.pollinator.org/poster2015.htm> features illustrations of six native carnivorous plants and their pollinators with the theme “They Don’t Eat Their Pollinators.” Carnivorous plants are well adapted to the environment of nutrient-poor soils by feeding on insects. But how do they attract both pollinator and prey? The poster’s website features information about the plants, the pollinators, and the artist’s creative process.

Included among the illustrations is the two-spotted bumble bee, *Bombus bifasciatus*, pollinating a white-topped pitcher plant, *Sarracenia leucophylla*, a threatened carnivorous plant found in seepage areas and savanna bogs of southeastern Mississippi and western Florida. The leaves of the plant take the form of a pitcher. Insects are attracted by the color, scent, and nectar-like secretions on the lip of the pitchers. Inside the pitcher are downward pointing hairs that make retreat by captured prey challenging. The bottom of the pitcher is filled with fluid containing digestive enzymes and bacteria. The flowers, held singly on long stems, reward pollinators with pollen and nectar a month before the plants produce the carnivorous pitchers.

The Pollinator Partnership is the largest non-profit organization in the world dedicated to the protection and promotion of pollinators and their ecosystems. It manages the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC), a consortium of more than 120 affiliated organizations, working to implement, promote and support a clear, continent-wide coordinated action plan to coordinate projects in the areas of pollinator research, education and awareness, conservation and restoration. The National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) has been a partner of NAPPC since its inception in 1999, and NMNH conservation biologist Gary Krupnick serves on the NAPPC Steering Committee. Krupnick led the scientific advisory team in overseeing the production and scientific content of the 2015 Pollinator Week poster.

NMNH and other members of NAPPC will be hosting events at their institutions to mark Pollinator Week. NMNH will feature a variety of public programs including lectures and family friendly activities that will focus on plants and their pollinators during the week of June 15. Be sure to check the 2015 Pollinator Week map and events <http://www.pollinator.org/npw_events.htm> for the latest information.

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