Meet the Pollinators

You may have heard a lot about pollinators, but what is all the buzz about? To put it simply, a pollinator can be anything that carries pollen from one plant to another, allowing plants to reproduce. Without pollinators, plants cannot reproduce and without plants, humans and every other animal on earth would go hungry.

Because of this, it is vitally important to preserve pollinator habitat, so that pollinators can continue to survive and thrive.

You may encounter many different kinds of pollinators here at Janes Island State Park, but here are some of the most common:

Bats

Though you might not think so, many species of bats are fantastic pollinators. Throughout the world, bats pollinate an assortment of plants such as bananas and the cocoa tree. While the species of bats found in Maryland aren't primarily pollinators, they are still an important part of the ecosystem, feeding on insects.

Butterflies

In their caterpillar form, many species of butterfly rely on a specific plant for food and shelter. For example, monarch caterpillars exclusively eat milkweed. After undergoing metamorphosis, butterflies drink the nectar of flowers with their straw-like mouth, called a proboscis.

Bees

It isn't just honeybees that do all the pollinating. The over 4,000 different native species of bees in North America, pollinate the majority of flowering plants. The fuzzy fibers on their bodies catch pollen, making them masters of their craft.

Hummingbirds

Using their straw-like tongues, hummingbirds drink the nectar of a flower. North American hummingbirds beat their wings at an average of 53 beats per second. So, in order to keep their wings beating at this pace, they may consume up to two times their body weight each day.

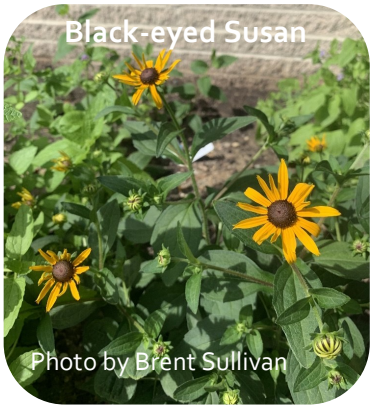
Given these four choices, what pollinator would you be for a day? _____

Once you choose your pollinator, keep these questions in mind as you hike White Tail Trail. You'll encounter the following habitats that your pollinator could choose to call home. Each habitat is labeled with a letter of the alphabet. Once, Your task is to figure out which habitat you think will best meet the needs of your chosen pollinator and then to complete the attached work sheet.

A: Native Plant Garden

A plant is native when it is found naturally in its environment. As native plants exist simultaneously with the native animals in their environment, *many species depend on them for food and shelter*.

You will find a wide variety of plants and flowers native to this part of the Eastern Shore, such as bee balm and milkweed, located in the gardens outside of the Nature Center and Park Headquarters. buildings.



B: Phragmites

Phragmites is an invasive plant that has taken over a lot of the marshes of the Chesapeake bay. An invasive species is the opposite of a native species, in that it is not originally from the environment it is growing in.

Originating in Europe, Phragmites was introduced in North America by humans and has been aggressively spreading ever since. Because invasive species do not have any natural predators, their growth is often uninhibited. Additionally, invasive species crowd out and kill native plants, which can also kill the organisms that rely on native plants for food and shelter.

C: Loblolly Pine Forest

In addition to being one of the most common trees in the Southeastern United States, Loblolly pine trees dominate the forests on this part of the Eastern Shore. To identify a Loblolly pine tree, all you need to do is look at its needles. If it has needles that are together in groups of three, then it's a loblolly. Dead and rotting loblolly pines, provide great nesting cavities for a wide variety of animals.

D: The Marshes of Janes Island

The marshes of Janes Island are host to a multitude of native grasses and flowers such as *Spartina alterniflora* (saltmarsh cordgrass) and black needlerush. In the fall, you can see the yellow flowers of seaside goldenrod across the marshes of Janes Island.

My Pollinator is _____

Here's what my pollinator looks like

Here's what my habitat will look like and what other animals live there with me.

Here's what my pollinator might eat in a day

Black Swallowtail on Black Eyed Susan by Graham Slaughter