

POLLINATORS *from page 1A*

“The State of Oregon promotes wise conservation stewardship, including the protection and maintenance of native pollinators and their habitats on working lands wild lands,” Brown said. “Oregon seeks to manage its wildlife habitats and public lands to maintain native plant communities, the overall health of the ecosystem and preservation of biodiversity.”

The national and bi-partisan support for efforts associated with the complex paradigm of pollinator health started with U.S. Senate action 11 years ago and has steadily gained momentum since then.

One primary focus of Pollinator Week efforts in Oregon is being coordinated by the Oregon Bee Project. Formed in 2017 at Oregon State University (OSU), the program is at the forefront of research into the lives and impact of the more than 500 species of bees that live in Oregon.

The Oregon Bee Project has established strong working relationships with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Forestry, sharing data

and analysis. This interactive approach to pollinator management is central to the idea that collecting and sharing information is the best way to adequately understand an issue.

The Pollinator Health Research and Extension program is run by Andony Melathopoulos, under the auspices of the OSU Department of Horticulture.

Melathopoulos is considered one of the country’s leading experts on pollination and also on Oregon’s bee population.

“Managed bee stocks and wild pollinator populations are part of a broadly interconnected agroecological system. Various parts of this system influence pollinator health and, in turn, pollinator contributions back to agricultural yield,” Melathopoulos said. “But since the system is so large and its various elements interact in a dynamic manner, the ultimate causes of pollinator decline and its impact on food production are frequently obscure. I am interested in research that specifies the linkages within this system.”

One of the best ways to determine the health of any species is



LYNN KETCHUM/OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

The Oregon Bee Project is at the forefront of research into the lives and impact of the more than 500 species of bees that are native to Oregon.

to visually identify individuals and count them. The number of subjects is totaled, along with observations of physical health or abnormalities, to assess the overall viability of a subject species.

“Last year we had a mild winter and a great fall, there was plenty of food, so it should have been a great

year for bees, but we will see. I think the data we gather this week will be important,” he said.

Gathering data is the main goal of the Oregon Bee project during Pollinator Week, as the group is compiling an Oregon Bee Atlas to create a baseline from which to add additional research results.

The Bee Atlas website attempts to interject a humorous, sci-fi hipness to the group’s mission, stating, “The Oregon Bee Atlas’ four-year mission is to train volunteers to explore Oregon counties, to seek out new native bee records for the state, to boldly go where no amateur melittologist has gone before!”

And while the tone of this invitation is light, the ultimate goal of the count is quite serious.

The need to accumulate as much information as possible on pollinators, in the face of mass colony collapse, in addition to dramatically diminished numbers of other pollinators, is key to achieving a real-world understanding of the problem.

“The Bee Atlas is a way of getting the story out and also contributing to the data we are gathering. People in the community are learning about the bees that live on the coast, and they bring that information to local schools and land management companies. They become ambassadors for bees,” Melathopoulos said. “All of this is to say that bees are important to Oregon and Oregonians appreciate their bees. The Oregon Bee Proj-

ect is about connecting the dots among all the things that already exist in the state that will lead to the health and preservation of all of our bees.”

One event that Melathopoulos suggests Florence residents should consider participating in is being held a short trip north at the Yaquina Lighthouse.

“There will be a great event at the Yaquina Bay State Recreation site in Newport that will be led by a Master Gardener from OSU. They will go to the lighthouse and discuss the many pollinators that frequent the area around the lighthouse, which has been planted with a number of pollinator-friendly plant species,” Melathopoulos said. “It should be a very interesting discussion and it’s a beautiful location.”

For more information on activities associated with Pollinator Week and The Oregon Bee Project, visit www.oregonbeeproject.org, which provides a list of free activities that the public can participate in during the remainder of Pollinator Week and year-round.

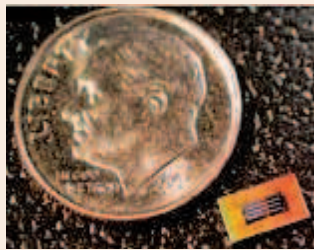
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