
Merkley announces launch of Center for Pollinator Conservation

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Recently, Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley announced the official launch of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Center for Pollinator Conservation.

The establishment of the Center was announced earlier this year by Senator Merkley, in collaboration with the Department of Interior, to address declining pollinator populations, including monarch butterflies, across North America.

"Protecting monarch butterflies is an urgent issue that requires sustainable solutions," said Senator Merkley, who secured additional western monarch conservation investments as Chairman of the Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, which funded this Center. "If we let the western monarch butterfly go extinct, we'll lose an iconic, beautiful species – and an important pollinator – forever. The launch of the Center for Pollinator Conservation will help ensure future generations are able to enjoy the monarch butterfly and other pollinators."

During the past 30 years, scientific and conservation communities and experts have documented a steep decline of pollinator populations—for example, the monarch butterfly population has decreased by 85%, and the western monarch by nearly 99%. Pollinators face big challenges, like climate change, pesticide exposure, and habitat loss, and benefit greatly from continuous widespread conservation efforts. Actions like planting native plants to provide pollinators food from flowers that bloom in the spring, summer and fall, and avoiding or limiting the use of pesticides by following label instructions can significantly help reduce these threats.

The Center will launch initially as a virtual collaborative space, and will work to amplify and add to the ongoing efforts to improve and increase pollinator populations. Specifically, the Center will focus on three key areas:

- Highlighting the importance of pollinators;
- Understanding and responding to threats; and
- Coordinating action to reverse population declines.