

Kelleys Island Pollinators & Partnerships

Our Story...

The need to protect and preserve pollinators is center stage. Animal pollinators and bees in particular face many threats, such as the lack of food, pests, pathogens, pesticides, invasive plants, climate change and loss of habitat for suitable nesting sites. Without the work of pollinators, many native plants could not produce the seeds to ensure the plant's next generation. These seeds and their fruit also provide important food sources for approximately twenty-five percent of birds and many mammal species. Key animal pollinators include native bees, birds, flies, butterflies, other insects, and some mammals. These animals are responsible for assisting over eighty percent of the world's flowering plants. Without them, humans and wildlife would not have much to eat or look at! By having animals move pollen from flower to flower we get more food and better quality of food, and this is a very vital purpose for life.

In the summer of 2018, the Kelleys Island Pollinators & Partnerships was started as a "grass roots" network between the Kelleys Island State Park and the Kelleys Island School and Field Station. We reached out to several experts for advice on the proper methods for preparing the soil and planting the seed. Then with much research we created a plant list of native plants to Kelleys Island, and had a plan that would take three years to show any results. (See attached plant list, and partners)

The plan kicked off in October 2018, when mowing began on the State Park properties totaling around 17 acres. A demonstration plot of around .15 acres was planted at the Kelleys Island School with coordination assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program and through the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative providing \$100 in milkweed seed and \$100 in milkweed plants. The Pollinator Partnership also provided \$500 for a diverse native seed mixture planted at the demonstration plot. This plot was developed at an accelerated rate with the same plant species used in the larger areas and managed in the same fashion as the other acreage within the State Park. In June 2019 nonnative plant species were removed in the State Park areas by the use of appropriate methods; this was repeated in July and August as needed. Using these habitat management techniques greatly increased the survival of native species by removing the outcompeting woody and herbaceous plant species. This spring (2020) specific grasses and wildflowers were planted with the assistance from Pheasants Forever and the ODNR Division of Wildlife (Mark Witt) If all goes as planned, we will have nearly 17 acres of pollinator habitat established by the summer, and in 2021 three more acres are scheduled for planting (see attached map for detailed areas).

We have had donations, advice, and a great amount of motivation which has allowed this project to become a success. And fortunately, we are only getting started! The seed that was planted this spring came from a variety of funding sources, but mostly from the local community on Kelleys Island. A large portion of the funding, \$17,000 came from local donations, while \$3,000 came from the Ohio Ornithological Society, and \$1,200 came from Pollinator Partnership. The support has exceeded our expectations, and we are excited to be able to successfully move forward with this project! Our future plan is to incorporate interpretative trails into two of the properties that will connect with already existing State Park trails. The properties will have an area for parking with signage explaining the project and partners involved. One of the habitats will have an Interactive Moth/Insects at Night Exhibit (see map for detailed areas).

This project has already been nationally recognized by Pollinator Partnership for the valuable contributions made to the Monarch Wings Across the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Program. With our participation, over 20 acres on Kelleys Island were registered as long-term secured habitat to support

the conservation of the Eastern migratory monarch population. Pollinator Partnership is a nonprofit organization that promotes the health of pollinators critical to food and ecosystems, through conservation, education, and research.

In December 2019, the Kelleys Island Village Council approved Kelleys Island as a Monarch City USA. Monarch City USA is a national organization that recognized our efforts and commitment to the environment through promoting civic pride and improvement by directly helping the monarch butterfly population recover by encouraging and planting milkweed and nectar plants within our boundaries. Both the Village of Kelleys Island, the Kelleys Island Audubon Club, and the Kelleys Island School purchased signs that will get posted in the village and at the school recognizing these efforts!

We have created lessons based on the Ohio Department of Education, STEM, and NEXT Generation learning standards for our local school kids, residents, our Nature Camps, and other educational programs for more hands-on learning. The Kelleys Island Field Station and School is working with the Ohio Division of Wildlife to be a State Certified WILD School Site. Wild School Sites are considered an action extension of Project WILD and can involve any school property used by students, teachers, and the community as a place to learn about and benefit from wildlife and the environment. These sites function within the premise that every school, regardless of size and location, can provide outdoor educational opportunities that can and should be part of any integrated education program.

The primary means for continuing our education and conservation activities include ongoing population and habitat monitoring at several different sites. We will do this by visual monitoring and surveys through the Monarch Larval Monitoring Project (MLMP) at four sites, the fall tagging program through Monarchwatch.org, Pollinator Monitoring through OSU's Phenology Garden Network, interpretive signage at current sites, and expanding current habitats on Kelleys Island. We plan on continued and expanded public and community outreach, and are developing new strategies to complement this.