



Wild Pollinator Count



How to Count

1. During the observation week, choose any day that is sunny, warm and calm. These weather conditions are important, as many insects don't like flying when it's cold, raining or very windy. If there is a shower of rain, wait at least an hour and for the sun to come out before doing your observation. Some pollinators don't fly in strong winds, so make sure it is calm or only lightly breezy when you perform your observation.
2. Find a flowering plant or tree in your garden, or in a local park. Choose a single, large flower, or a group of smaller flowers within your visible range (see [Counting FAQ](#) on the next page).
3. Watch the flowers continuously for 10 minutes. Record any insect that visits the flowers and moves around on the stamens or pistil (the yellow powdery parts of the flowers). Don't record anything that just flies past without touching the flower. If you can, try not to count the same individual insect twice.
4. Enter your observations on the [Submit Observations](#) page of our website (<http://wildpollinatorcount.com/submit-observations>). You can record as many different observations as you want – try watching different flowers at different times of the day. If you do multiple observations, make sure to enter each as a separate submission.
5. If you didn't see any pollinators at all, you can still submit your observations as '0' – these observations are just as helpful!
6. We encourage you to try multiple counts in different locations, or on different flowers. Some flowers are more attractive to pollinators than others, so you might see some interesting patterns!

If you'd like some help with identifying the insects you see, visit the [Resources](#) and [What pollinator is that?](#) pages online. And if you're not sure what type of pollinator you've seen, you can note that when you submit your observation.



Pollinator Counting FAQ

Is the counting method scientific?

Yes! For many ecological studies, like studies of pollinators, scientific data need to be collected at lots of different locations, and at different times. However, to be useful for scientific analysis, data need to be standardised in some way. So the only way to standardise the data is by making sure the methods used at each time and location are identical.

Why do I need to count pollinators on a day that is sunny, warm and calm?

Pollinators are cold-blooded, so most of them will only be active when the sun is out and it is warm (above 15° C). Flies, European honey bees and European wasps are generally more cold-tolerant than native bees, wasps or other flying insects, so you will often see these on warmer days during winter.

Why should I count for 10 minutes?

Pollinators are quick to move between flowers, so the best way to get an idea of how many are visiting your flowers is to watch for at least 10 minutes.

How many flowers?

Choosing how many flowers to watch depends on the plant. If a plant produces a single large flower per plant (e.g. sunflower), you only need to watch one flower head to get an idea of how many pollinators visit that plant. If a plant produces lots of smaller flowers on one head (e.g. coriander), or a few small flower heads on one plant (e.g. dandelion), then it will be more efficient to watch the whole head or the whole plant.

How do I know if I'm counting the same insect twice?

You don't always know! By watching the same flower, or group of flowers, you can drastically reduce the chances of counting the same insect, because you will notice an insect that 'lifts off' for a moment and then settles again. European honey bees are harder to count in these situations, because they often forage in groups, and individuals are hard to tell apart. But most native insects forage as individuals, or much smaller groups, so you should be able to keep an eye on who goes where. And the more you practice, the more you will get used to it!

What if an insect flies past, but doesn't sit on my flower?

If you see an insect that hovers around one flower, and then sits on a flower next to it, you can count it. Hoverflies and bees will often do this, so it can be more efficient to watch a small group of flowers, than one individual flower. But don't count insects that zoom past the whole plant without stopping.

How do I know if an insect is pollinating the flower?

You won't always be able to tell, but you won't need to worry about this for the count. Most insects that make contact with the stamens will probably carry some pollen grains away with them when they leave. To actually cause pollination of the plant, the insect will then have to make contact with the pistil (the female parts), which may be on the same flower, on another flower on the same plant, or on a completely different plant individual (see the [Resources](#) page for some great botany sites). But for the purposes of the Wild Pollinator Count, just count any insects you see on the flowers. If you want to tell us anything more about your pollinator observation, you will have the opportunity to let us know in the Observational Notes section on the [submission form](#).

What if I don't see anything?

This is still a result! We can't fully understand distributions and flower preferences of pollinators just from positive results. If we have records of flowers that have no insect visitors whatsoever, they can still provide important information on what pollinators don't like. So you can still submit an observation with '0' pollinators...and then do another observation!