

Wildflowers and wildlife

Many wildlife species depend on wildflowers for nourishment and habitat. In turn, wildflowers depend on wildlife for such things as pollination and seed transport.

Butterflies, wild bees, honey bees and other insects have especially close relationships with wildflowers. As they visit flowers for nectar and pollen, grains of pollen adhere to their bodies to be transferred to another flower. The cross-pollination that occurs is vital to the survival of many wildflowers. It's so vital, in fact, that many flowers have developed specific characteristics — such as color, flower shape and scent — to make themselves more attractive to their preferred pollinators.



Butterflies also use wildflowers as “host” plants — they deposit their eggs on the plants’ leaves, and when the eggs hatch, the larvae dine on the leaves. Some butterflies, such as the monarch, depend on just one genera of plants (in this case, milkweed) for this service.

While animals — including bears, gopher tortoises and birds — may visit wildflowers for tasty seeds, berries, leaves, stems and insects, the flowers depend on them to spread seeds. Many wildflower seeds have rough surfaces that let them easily adhere to hair or feathers so they can hitch a ride to their next destination. Others are eaten by the animal and passed through defecation.

Photo: Cloudless sulphur butterfly on standing cypress (Ipomopsis rubra) by Peg Urban

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Learn more

To learn more about the relationships between wildflowers and wildlife, we recommend these resources.

Websites

- [Florida Native Plant Society – Attracting Wildlife](#)
- [USDA Forest Service](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Library](#)

Books

- [Bringing Nature Home](#) (Doug Tallamy)
- [Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife](#) (Craig Huegel)
- [Butterfly Gardening with Florida's Native Plants](#) (Craig Huegel)
- [Your Florida Guide to Butterfly Gardening: A Guide for the Deep South](#) (Jaret Daniels)
- [Florida Butterfly Gardening: A Complete Guide to Attracting, Identifying, and Enjoying Butterflies](#) (Marc C. Minno)
- [Attracting Hummingbirds and Butterflies in Tropical Florida](#) (Roger Hammer)
- [Plant-Animal Interactions](#)