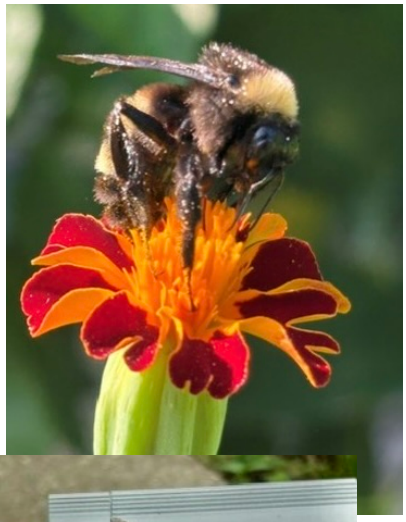
Impact Project Report

Surveying Bumblebees in Underreported Areas of North Carolina

Issue

Bumblebees are critical pollinators, capable of working in harsher weather conditions than many smaller pollinators and performing the buzz pollination needed by some plants. It is believed that populations are down as much as 25%. Additional data on sightings, species distribution and forage plants is needed by studying scientists. The Xerces Bumblebee Atlas project focuses on gathering this data yearly.



Project

Master Naturalist Toni Sweetland completed training on safely trapping and identifying bumblebees and obtained proper equipment to do survey work. She adopted an underreported area of NC and completed 10 surveys over August-September, 2026.

Selected survey spots ranged from public parks with only roadside wildflowers to private property with extensive pollinator plantings. Toni held numerous informal education sessions engaging families during surveys at the public parks. Toni was also able to discuss potential improved planting with Park Directors and homeowners.



Results

67 bumblebees of 2 species were observed and uploaded to the Xerces database. This included 29 American (*Bombus pensylvanicus*) and 38 Common Eastern (*Bombus impatiens*). The American bumblebee is considered "in decline" status. The most common forage plant observed during her survey time was the Partridge Pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), a reliable late summer bloomer. Not surprisingly, private properties that focused on pollinator plants presented the most specimens with one property alone delivering 25. Toni was happy with the results observed and looks forward to completing surveys next year over the full season range.

Student

This project is the work of Toni Sweetland

Highlight

Partner Organization

Xerces Society

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