



# Xerces Update

Donor Newsletter of the Xerces Society

*February 2020*

I want to thank all of you, whether you are new to Xerces or a long-time member, for your incredible support in 2019. Looking forward, the challenges are daunting: Continuing loss of biodiversity, with declines in species we care about; the climate crisis that is leading to severe weather, fires, droughts—you name it—not to mention a weakening of federal environmental policy. All this can really get a person down.

As we move forward in 2020, I do not want to shy away from these challenges to conservation, but I also want to focus on solutions and highlight projects and people that are making a difference, making the world a better place.

Xerces is doing incredible and durable work—and all of you are the reason why. The Xerces method is effective. Using applied research, advocacy, outreach and education, and technical assistance we are achieving lasting conservation through protection, enhancement, and restoration of habitat. We need to continue this approach this year and amplify it, so that we can build a stronger movement to empower all people to take action for the planet.

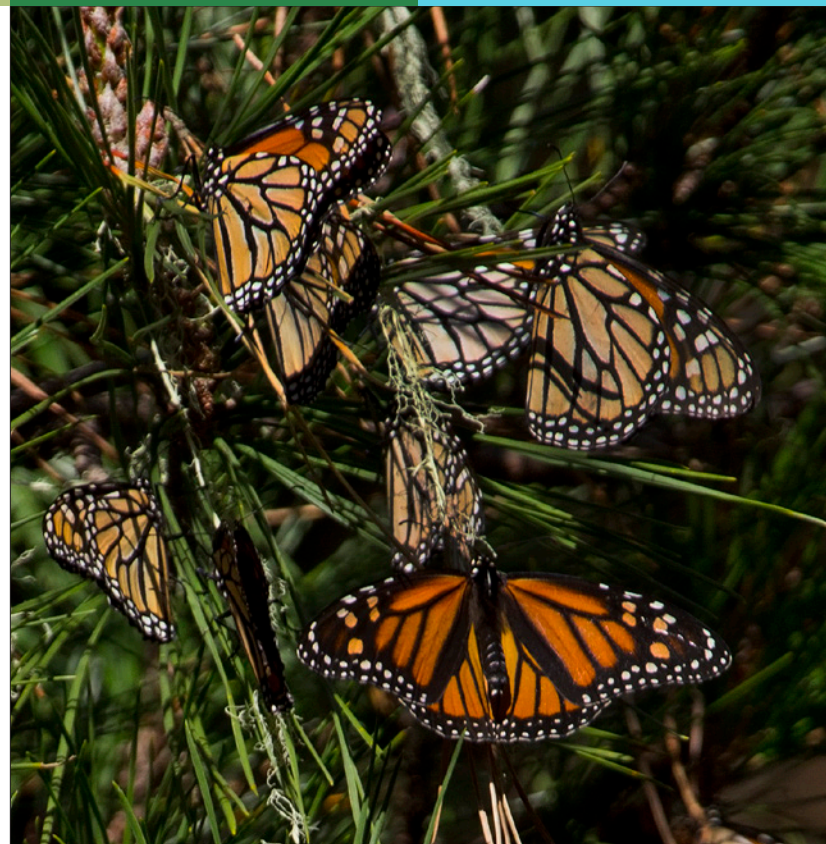
Working with you and all of our allies gives me hope for the future. I hope it gives you hope as well. Together we can make the world a better place in 2020 and beyond.

Thanks again for everything you do.

*Scott Black, Director*

***“You may never know what results come of your action, but if you do nothing there will be no result.”***

*– Mahatma Gandhi*



The number of monarch butterflies overwintering in California remains at critical levels, with the total number counted below 30,000 for the second year in a row. The population is less than 1% of its size in the 1980s. Urgent steps are needed to protect overwintering sites and ensure adequate habitat with milkweed and nectar flowers. Visit [savewesternmonarchs.org](http://savewesternmonarchs.org) to find out what you can do.

(Photo: Xerces Society / Carly Voight.)



## Connect, learn, discover

Our website contains a wealth of information about what you can do to help invertebrates, as well as fresh articles posted to our blog. You can also connect with us @xercessociety on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter!

[xerces.org](http://xerces.org)

Please mail donations and membership renewals to:

P. O. Box 97387

Washington, DC 20090-7387

(855) 232-6639, option 2

[membership@xerces.org](mailto:membership@xerces.org)



## Engaging Communities in Conservation

In the last few years, Xerces staff have worked more and more in towns and cities. This is part of an expansion of our community engagement team that allows us to work more closely with neighborhood groups on small habitat projects, have a direct involvement in local events, and provide more support to people wanting to make their hometown better for pollinators.

The volunteer Ambassadors program greatly expands our ability to connect with new communities, provides opportunities for people to learn about invertebrates, and encourages participation in community science, nature exploration, and direct conservation action. The Ambassadors program was launched last year under the leadership of Rachel Dunham, with the first group recruited from the Portland, Oregon, area. The Ambassadors all undergo training in outreach techniques as well as topics such as pollinators, monarchs, and fireflies, and Rachel has developed—with assistance from Ambassadors—tabling activities and games. During the first year, the Ambassadors participated in events in nine cities in northwest Oregon and southwest Washington and made connections with over 4,500 people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. This year we are expanding this effort to the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, which will allow our Ambassadors to reach many more states.

Bee City USA was launched in 2012 by Phyllis Stiles. In 2018, Bee City became part of the Xerces Society. Phyllis was planning to retire and wanted a good home for it, where it would continue to thrive—and it has. There are now 104 Bee Cities and 90 Bee Campuses, with affiliates in 42 states. At the start of this year, Molly Martin took over the reins and the number of affiliates is still growing. Each city and campus commits to create habitat for native pollinators, reduce pesticide use, and undertake outreach in the community. Xerces staff support these activities by providing technical advice on habitat projects, pesticide reduction, and preparation of IPM plans, as well as guidance and materials for outreach. In the year ahead, we will develop additional outreach materials, set up an online toolkit for affiliates, and host webinars.

Towns and cities can be great places for insects and other invertebrates. Through our Ambassadors and Bee City USA, we will engage many more people in creating positive change.



Xerces' volunteer Ambassadors take insect-focused information and activities into the community, an opportunity to engage more people in conservation. (Photo: Seth Winklehake.)

## Creating Habitat to Support Monarchs in California



The population of monarchs that overwinter in California has plummeted from over 4 million in the 1980s to less than 30,000 butterflies in each of the last two years. To help with the urgent need for habitat, Xerces developed habitat “kits,” each one containing 1,600 native milkweeds and nectar plants. Thanks to funding from the Wildlife Conservation Society Climate Adaptation Fund, The Starbucks Foundation, and individual Xerces Society donors, we were able to provide 32 kits to partners in 20 counties in California. These photos show some of the kits being planted to bring habitat back into the landscape. Thank you to everyone who made this possible!





# MONTHLY GIVING

No renewal notices,  
convenient payment options,  
a continued connection

*...and our deepest gratitude.*

Join the movement at  
[xerces.org/donate](https://xerces.org/donate)



Small carpenter bee foraging on purple prairie clover. (Photo: Xerces Society / Sarah Foltz Jordan.)

## SUPPORTING RESEARCH

### The DeWind Award: An Enduring Legacy

Joan Mosenthal DeWind was a pioneering member of the Xerces Society. A psychiatric social worker by profession, she was also an avid butterfly gardener and an accomplished amateur lepidopterist. Her contributions of time, organizational expertise, and financial support were essential to the growth and success of the Xerces Society during the 1970s and 80s, and helped build a robust foundation that enabled the organization to grow into the conservation leader it is now. Joan also had a keen interest in youth, supporting what became the Young Entomologists' Society. In Joan's memory, her husband Bill DeWind established an endowment fund through the Xerces Society that has allowed us to make two awards each year to students undertaking research into Lepidoptera conservation for more than 15 years.

The recipients of the awards can be interested in any aspect of butterflies and moths, but the work must have conservation benefit and it must be leading toward a university degree. The range of topics studied by awardees is broad: habitat fragmentation, herbicide impacts, effects of climate change, disease, light pollution, and more—and the global reach is nearly as wide. Most projects are in North America, but they have been as far afield as Brazil, Singapore, Tibet, and the Czech Republic.

In 2019, the two awards went to studies in the United States. Niranjana Krishnan, of Iowa State University, is assessing the risk of agricultural insecticides to monarch butterflies in habitats adjacent to croplands. Results from this project will help identify ideal locations for milkweed placements in agricultural landscapes. Molly Wiebush, of Florida State University, is studying how the butterfly community in an old-growth longleaf pine savanna responds to unburned patches within prescribed burns, including how adults use unburned patches and whether these unburned patches change how butterfly flight periods and flower availability overlap. This information can improve the use of prescribed fire as a conservation tool for Lepidoptera and other species.

We will announce the winners of the 2020 awards soon. We want to thank all the members of the DeWind family for their ongoing support of Xerces, and for continuing the legacy of a remarkable woman with a vision for engaging young people in conserving butterflies and moths.

A DeWind Award enabled life history studies of the mardon skipper (*Polites mardon*), knowledge that underpinned successful conservation efforts for this rare butterfly. (Photo: Xerces Society / Rich Hatfield.)





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**[xerces.org/gifts](http://xerces.org/gifts)**