



## Hoverflies

I hope that after reading this, you will appreciate these little guys as much as I do. Despite hoverflies contributing to a VERY large part of the pollination of both crops and wild plants, they are unfairly overseen, so let's set the record right! Hoverflies are relatively small (about half-an-inch), are flies and thus have only one pair of wings that they carry open as a 'T'. Hoverflies are often confused with bees and wasps, because many of them have yellow stripes on their abdomens. However, it's relatively easy to tell them apart because they have two wings (versus four in wasps and bees), they hover and make very fast movements when they fly, they usually have \*huge\* eyes, and their antennae are very short. Hoverflies are diurnal pollinators, and prefer white, yellow and greenish flowers.



*Hoverflies are very common around our flowers in Maryland. Photo: A. Espindola.*

## Beetles

Certain families of this very large group of insects visit and pollinate flowers, while feeding on pollen. Beetles that pollinate can be minute to large. One can recognize them because of the hard 'shield' that covers their backs, and for the usual hair that covers at least part of their bodies. Beetles can be active during day and night hours, and prefer flowers that are greenish, white and relatively dull. In Maryland, most of our pollinator beetles are soldier and longhorn beetles. Next time you are around flowers, I invite you to take a close look and I am sure you will have no trouble finding these guys!



*Goldenrod Soldier Beetle.  
Photo: C. Grenier (CC).*

# Is this a Pollinator?



## Five types of pollinating insects we can find in College Park

– Anahí Espíndola



Gardeners, naturalists, researchers, conservation agents, politicians, everybody talks about pollinators these days. It seems that pollinators need our help, and that we need to help them help us. However, it's really hard to protect something that we don't fully know...so let's fix it by taking a look at our insect pollinators, how and when to look for them, and how to tell them apart.

## Bees

Bees are one of the most important groups of pollinators. Aside from the well-known non-native honeybee, bees are very diverse in terms of size, ecology and coloration. In our area, bees range from very small (like our metallic sweat bees) to large (like our metallic sweat bees) to large (like our carpenter bees and bumblebees), and display different colors and even metallic shines. Bees can be recognized because they have two pairs of wings, 'elbowed' antennae, and usually hairy legs and bodies. Bees fly and visit flowers both during daytime and dawn, and can be seen on flowers of different colors (e.g., pink, purple, blue, white, yellow).



*Bumblebees (above) and small solitary bees (below) are very common pollinators.*

*Photos: A. Espindola.*



## Butterflies

Butterflies have 'conflictual' relationships with their preferred plants: while in their caterpillar stage they feed on their leaves and stems, they pollinate flowers in their adult 'butterfly' stage. Maryland butterflies span different sizes, colors and shapes. You may be familiar with the impressive Monarchs, who feed on milkweed and are able to migrate hundreds of miles, our very own state insect the rare Baltimore Checkerspot, or the beautiful swallowtails. Because of their special mouth shape with a rolled 'tongue', butterflies prefer flowers that have long tubes. Butterflies are diurnal, and are usually attracted to red, orange, yellow and mauve flowers.



*Skippers are some of the butterflies we can often find on our local flowers.*

*Photo: A. Espindola*

## Moths

Moths are relatives of butterflies, but from a pollination perspective differ from them because the majority of them are active in the dusk and into the night. Like butterflies, moths have long tongues that they use to collect nectar from flowers, and thus their preferred flowers are somewhat tubular. Moths can be small or large, but the vast majority of them are attracted to flowers that bloom in the evening, that produce strong and sweet scents, and that are usually whitish. While some pollinating moths are fair fliers, the impressive hawkmoths can hover and are easy to recognize because they are very hairy and fly like hummingbirds. Even though most moths are nocturnal, some hawkmoths are diurnal, such as hummingbird moths.



*A local hummingbird moth: the snowberry clearwing. Photo: C McClarren & A. Reago (CC).*

