



City of Burnsville

100 Civic Center Parkway, Burnsville, MN 55337

Phone: 952-895-4400

Fax: 952-895-4404

www.burnsvillemn.gov

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Contact:

Caleb Ashling

Burnsville Natural Resources
952-895-4543

Jill Utrup

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
952-252-0092 (X. 207)

ENDANGERED BEE SPECIES FOUND IN BURNSVILLE PRAIRIE CONSERVATION PROJECT AREA

A new discovery in one of Burnsville's prairie conservation project areas shows that a dedicated effort to provide pollinator habitat is paying off.

The federally endangered rusty patched bumble bee has recently been discovered in several Burnsville parks – with the largest population found in the restored Civic Center Prairie near Burnsville City Hall (corner of Nicollet Avenue and Civic Center Parkway).

About the Rusty patched Bumble Bee

Rusty patched bumble bees were once widespread in prairie and savanna throughout the Midwest region. Due to pathogens, habitat loss, pesticide use and other factors, they have disappeared from most of their former range. By 2017, populations had declined so much that the bee was listed as a federally endangered species.

About Civic Center Prairie

One of Burnsville's showcase projects in the effort to support pollinators is Civic Center Prairie. In 2010, the City took an area of underutilized turf grass (around 80,000 square feet) and converted it to native prairie. Not only did this reduce maintenance requirements such as mowing, fertilizing and weed control, but it also provided a diverse habitat for birds, butterflies and a variety of bees.

"It's one of the most wildflower-heavy prairies that we have in the City," said Burnsville Natural Resources Specialist Caleb Ashling. "When it's in full bloom, it's literally buzzing with all different kinds of bees."

Discovery of an Endangered Species

Recently, a local U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist informed the City that one of the bee species using the site was the endangered rusty patched bumble bee.

"It's a great addition to the story of this project," said Ashling. "We knew that the prairie was providing habitat for a lot of pollinators, but finding out that this endangered bee is also using the prairie is especially exciting. It's nice to know that even in the suburban landscape, these projects can support rare species."

PLEASE NOTE: *Residents are encouraged to visit the Civic Center Prairie, but asked to please view the prairie from designated trails or adjacent turf areas to avoid disturbing the habitat and bees. It is illegal to touch or capture rusty patched bumble bees without a permit to do so.*

(more)

Importance of Pollinator Habitat

The City of Burnsville has made aiding pollinator populations a focus for a number of years. Projects have included restoring pollinator habitat on parkland, organizing a yearly native plant market and hosting workshops that educate residents on the use of pollinator-friendly native plants.

In addition to local governments, private landowners can also play an important role in helping support pollinators like the rusty-patched bumble bee.

“The Civic Center Prairie is a wonderful example of how if you plant it, they will come!” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Biologist, Jill Utrup. “We have a unique opportunity to help a critically imperiled pollinator species in our urban yards and parks. Planting a sequence of native wildflowers that will bloom from early spring through fall, avoiding or limiting pesticide use, and providing un-mowed brushy areas will go a long way in helping this species.”

Protecting Pollinators Workshop

To help Burnsville residents learn how they can help pollinators in their own yards, the City will be holding a pollinator workshop in August:

- Who:** Burnsville residents
- When:** Thursday, Aug. 1 | 6:15 – 7:15 p.m.
- Where:** Burnsville City Hall, 100 Civic Center Parkway
- Cost:** FREE

- Register:** Online at www.burnsvillemn.gov/nativeplants

The workshop will be led by local author and bee expert Heather Holms, and will focus on selecting pollinator- and bird-friendly trees and shrubs.

For more information visit www.burnsvillemn.gov/nativeplants or www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/insects/rpbb



Prairie wildflowers and grasses at the Civic Center Prairie provide excellent habitat for pollinators



A rusty-patched Bumble Bee feeds on Wild Bergamot at Burnsville’s Civic Center Prairie (Credit J. Utrup, USFWS)