

LCC aims for bee-friendly certification to fight declining insect population



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By virtue of Lane Community College's core value of sustainability, students and staff gathered April 5 for a bee and pollinator-friendly planting event on campus, planting in four different locations. The project was coordinated by Luis Maggiori, project coordinator for LCC's Institute For Sustainable Practices. LCC began efforts in 2018 to become certified as a Bee Campus in the state of Oregon through the Xerces Society and Bee City USA, and are currently in the active application process.

A large topic of conversation in recent years has been the decline of native bee populations. There are approximately 20,000 species of bees worldwide, 4,000 species in America alone. One in four wild bee species in the U.S. is at risk of extinction, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. This threatens more than just the bees.

"Insects are an integral part of our ecosystem. Globally, insects including pollinators are



Ashaundra Talbot / Illustrator

in steady rate of decline. Many animals depend on insects as their food source, not having this food source available can cause the death of some birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish. Food production relies significantly on the presence of pollinators as well as wild plants and trees," Maggiori said.

The decline in the American bee population can be attributed

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Luis Maggiori, LCC Institute For Sustainable Practices

ing to Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Additionally, domesticated bees

several ways in which managed bees could affect wild bees including through competition over finite

resources such as nectar, pollen or nesting habitat," Dr. Rachel E. Mallingier, an entomologist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, wrote in an article. "Competition could still have negative effects if wild bees are forced to forage on less nutritious plants, spend more time searching for flowers that are unoccupied or whose resources have not yet been depleted, or forage further from their nests."

"At Lane Community College we emphasize place-based learning and recognize the essential nature of understanding and caring for our bioregion and its interconnected ecosystems," Maggiori said. "We hope to foster an understanding that native bees and other native insects are more efficient pollinators than domestic bees and that a diversity of wild bee and other insect species provides a greater chance of recovery from disease, extreme weather, and climate change. We also hope to foster an understanding that because growing healthy food depends upon pollinators, conservation of native species will play an important role in food security in the future."

The pollinator-friendly plants and blooms set today will protect and nurture wild bees and other native insects by providing a diversity of pollinator habitat patches and pollinator pathways or corridors, with a diversity of bloom times so that pollinators can always find appropriate food. It could aid in improving local ecosystems affected by a changing climate. ●