

## Survey of Species Composition at BIRDLINK – Insects and Pollinators

**Background:** Plants often rely on mobile animals to help them reproduce! In fact, more than 75% of flowering plants depend on these pollinators. Plants have to offer something to these animals to draw them in, such as food or shelter in their leaves. At BIRDLINK, there are many native plants that provide pollinators, such as bees, birds, and butterflies, shelter and a food source, such as nectar. Pollinators not only help plants reproduce but they are also important food sources for wildlife. Learn more about these important pollinators in this insect survey!

Some questions that could come up from this survey of BIRDLINK are what insects visit the site or when are insects most active in pollination at the site?

The purpose of this survey is to identify which pollinators visit the site and see how native plants can support pollinators. The time frame of this survey could be a one-time visit (as short as 10 minutes) for data collection or long-term over months to observe seasonal changes of insect appearance at the structure.



**Materials:** insect field guides (ideally regionally specific), insect dichotomous keys, ethograms to collect animal behavior data, magnifying glass, smartphone with wildlife identifying apps, sketch books, paper, color pencils, pen/pencil

### Procedure:

1. Look at the insects visiting BIRDLINK structure and work to identify them. Take pictures of insects before they fly away! Then use field guides, dichotomous key or phone apps like iNaturalist or PlantNet to identify as best you can.
2. For each insect that you identify, write down the common name, scientific name (as specific as you can get), whether the insect is native to your area, the way that you identified the insect, a sketch, and if the insect is visiting a plant in bloom in the table below.

Now that you have identified some insects at BIRDLINK, what is the most interesting fact you have learned so far?

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### Supplemental Activity

After observing the structure and the insect life within it, fill out this chart to gather your thoughts:

I notice...	I wonder....
It reminds me of....	Drawing of your favorite insect at BIRDLINK

### Data Collection:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Is this insect native to the area? If not, where is it from?	How did you identify the insect?	Sketch the insect here	Is the insect visiting a plant in bloom? If it is, describe the flower smell and color

After you have collected data for this survey, draw a figure that would display the data in a visual way. It could be a graph, map, table, chart, etc.

### Conclusion

a. What trends did you find in your data? Refer to the figure you created above.

Additional discussion questions could be: how many native insects did you identify vs. non-native? Where are the non-native insects originally from? Are some of the insects you identified considered pollinators? Why are pollinators important/why should we provide habitat for pollinators?

b. Why do you think it is important to study the insect make-up at BIRDLINK? Why do you think we should focus on insect biodiversity and conservation in spaces like these?