

Native Bee Watch Community Science – Adult Education Research Internship

Overview - Pollinator populations are declining worldwide, partly due to urbanization and habitat loss. Bees, specifically, are crucial for sustainable ecosystems, necessitating the need to strengthen efforts in public awareness and engagement to mitigate continued declines. Native Bee Watch (NBW) is a community science program offered through CSU Extension that trains and supports volunteers to identify and monitor bees. As a multi-disciplinary collaboration, NBW's overarching goal is to create a ripple effect of engagement and education based on ecological and social science research.

The NBW Adult Education Research Internship will contribute to the ongoing social science research to improve and build the program, thereby extending its reach and impact. The current research has two goals: 1) Evaluate and evolve the current education program for bee monitoring volunteers, and 2) assess the effects of the design changes from (1) on the social and scientific factors of monitoring, including volunteer skills and confidence, scientific process and understanding, and quantity and quality of data. Results from this research will not only improve the volunteer experience but will also improve the accuracy of the data collected by volunteers, leading to higher quality ecological research on bees.

This student will support this research by 1) participating in NBW team meetings, 2) ask a research question based on data being collected, 2) participate in data collection that may include surveys, interviews, social media work, etc. 3) analyze data, 4) share results that may include presentations, informal science writing, and a peer-reviewed journal article.

Learning Outcomes and Professional Development - The intern will gain experience with verbal and written communication, working as a team, and applied research and problem solving. They will also gain knowledge in the areas of pollinator conservation, horticulture issues as it relates to individuals and communities. Skills developed during the internship will be transferrable to other jobs and projects the student may pursue. The intern will also have the professional development opportunities to shadow staff in other program areas and will gain a broader understanding of the role of Extension interfacing with research and the community. The intern will have a support network to rely on, but will be expected to be a self-starter, work remotely without direct supervision, and communicate effectively.

Mentors and Partners – The intern will work with Dr. Jill Zarestky, from the School of Education, and Lisa Mason, a Horticulture Agent in Arapahoe County. The NBW team values experiential learning opportunities and the development of skills aligned with professional goals. Zarestky and Mason are passionate about their work and balance collaboration with independence. The intern will work closely with Arapahoe County, Native Bee Watch volunteers, Colorado Master Gardener volunteers, and other community groups across the Front Range.

Location – The intern will split time between remote work and in-person events along the Front Range, primarily in Denver and Fort Collins.