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HELP NEEDED TO TRACK ENDANGERED BUMBLE BEES

Columbus, OH: Bee populations across the country are facing survival threats, and one Ohio species—the rusty patched bumble bee—has recently been listed as federally endangered.

The Ohio State University and partner agencies hope to jumpstart public input through the Ohio Bee Atlas, a new statewide citizen science project. Ohioans can upload bee images from phones or other devices to include in the Atlas. Experts will weigh-in to identify the images. The effort was launched jointly by several local organizations using the *iNaturalist* platform to document the distribution and identity of bumble bees and other Ohio bees.

The rusty patched bumble bee was once common throughout Ohio. The species occupied a variety of habitats including prairies, woodlands, marshes, agricultural landscapes, residential parks and gardens.

“Bees – including bumble bees, honey bees and many other species -- are facing threats such as loss of nesting and food habitat, diseases, pesticides, intensive farming and global climate change,” says Denise Ellsworth of The Ohio State University Bee Lab. “These threats have contributed to the decline of the rusty patched bumble bee, which is now in danger of becoming extinct,” said Ellsworth.

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, bumble bees are not only important pollinators of crops and necessary for native wildflower reproduction, but also for creating seeds and fruits that feed wildlife.

The Ohio Bee Atlas project is the joint effort of Cleveland Metroparks, Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership (LEAP) for Biodiversity, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, The Ohio State University, Summit Metro Parks, The University of Akron, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Participants can upload images of bees to the iNaturalist project site; bee experts will then identify bees based on the images.

For more information about the Ohio Bee Atlas project, visit go.osu.edu/ohiobeeatlas. To receive a free Common Bees of Ohio identification card, send a business-sized SASE to: Denise Ellsworth, OSU Entomology, 1680 Madison Ave., Wooster, OH 44691.

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