

Pollinator Field Guide

Overview: Make your own pollinator field guide for identification fun on nature walks or in the garden.

Materials:

- Photos of pollinators taken with a phone or camera, printed from websites, or cut out from magazines (another option is for students to draw their own pictures)
- Index cards or card stock
- Metal binder rings



Approximate Time to Complete: 1+ hours

Location: Indoor to make, outdoor to use

Ages: PreK – 2nd Grade (adaptable for older students, too)

Season: Any season to make, Spring, Summer and Fall to use

Instructions

Inspire your young gardeners to take a closer look at pollinators by creating your own pollinator field guide as a handy tool for learning, observation, and exploration. Traditional field guides can be challenging for young children to use, so this is a fun way to introduce them to the concept using age-appropriate tools.

1. Gather a collection of photos of pollinators frequently found in your area. This can be done in a number of different ways:

Take your own. Plan a few nature and/or garden walks with the specific purpose of trying to capture pollinators in action. This could be in your own garden or yard, a community garden, at a nature center or park, or at a botanical garden or arboretum. Choose locations and seasons with plenty of plants in bloom (the more diverse the plants, the more pollinators you will be able to find). Take care not to step on or in any way damage plant materials in your pursuit of your photos.

Search online. Photos free to use for personal and educational purposes are readily available online; however, you will need to create a list of pollinators in your area to search for. You may want to start by checking with your local native plant societies as their native plant lists often mention the pollinators they attract. Other resources to search include the US Forest Service's Pollinator Website (<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/>) and Pollinator Partnership Ecoregional Planting Guides (<https://www.pollinator.org/guides>). Another possibility is to search through the resources from the entomology department of your state's land grant university (<https://nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory>).

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Clip photos from magazines or old books. If you receive any science or nature magazines or have any old field guides that are no longer in use (check used book stores), you may be able to find pictures of some common pollinators you can use.

Draw your own. Although their drawings may not have as much detail as photos, students' hand-drawn pictures of pollinators can be a fine (and delightful) alternative, especially for young children.

2. Make a card for each pollinator using an index card or piece of cardstock (any size). Attach the photo at the top and then add a few fun facts about the pollinator, such as favorite kinds of flowers/plants to visit or details about their life cycle. If possible, you may want to include additional pictures of what they look like in each stage of their life cycle, especially if they experience complete metamorphosis.

*Optional: You may want to have your cards laminated or you can also cover them with clear contact paper or enclose in a plastic sandwich bag.

3. Punch a hole in one corner and then attach the cards together with a metal binder ring.
4. Take the new Pollinator Field Guide on your next nature walk and teach your kids to appreciate all the mighty pollinating animals out there making sure the plants make seeds. Keep adding more cards as you discover new pollinators!

Additional Resource to Check Out

Seek by iNaturalist is a family-friendly phone app created by the California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic (https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app) to help with identification of living creatures of all sizes. If you do not have time to make your own pollinator field guide or if you find something on your hunt that you cannot identify, check out this resource as an alternative option.

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