



## California Poppy & Bee! By Shana Cook

There is no denying that Spring has officially arrived! Certainly, everyone has noticed the flush of Poppies brightening the corners of so many spaces. These happy flowers are such a delight and surprise, since I have never actually planted or seeded them. This year I took a closer look and noticed the most adorable tiny bees twisting about the base of the flowers, coating themselves in pollen goodness.

More about the importance of *Eschscholzia californica*:

[https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg\\_esca2.pdf](https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg_esca2.pdf)

The California poppy has some direct wildlife value, with seed and seed pod comprising less than 5% of small mammal diets and providing minor cover for small birds (Martin et al., 1951). The importance of the species to mammals is likely increased in certain resource-limited environments. Indirect benefit to other animal species may be substantial as insect visitation and overall insect abundance may increase relative to the pollen-rich flowers. This floral resource, as a member of a diverse plant community, may serve as an important link in the food web. Pollinators and Beneficial Insects: From late February to late September, numerous and varied insects are attracted to the vibrant flowers and abundant pollen of the California poppy. The species is an obligate out-crosser, relying upon the pollination services of insects for reproductive success (Beatty, 1936; Cook, 1962) though reports of sterile plants have been recorded (Wright 1979). Common pollinators include bumble bees (Apidae), sweat bees (Halictidae), mining bees (Andrenidae) and European honey bees (Apidae: *Apis mellifera*). There is also evidence that up to **five specialist pollinators** (oligoleges) of the genus *Perdita* (Apidae) may gather pollen from California poppy..