**Possible Titles:**

“Flower resource abundance and dietary specialization determine colonization and extinction dynamics in an urban pollinator metacommunity” – more broad and basic ecology focused

“Flowering trees and shrubs are more important than herbaceous meadow enhancements for urban pollinator conservation” – more specific and applied

***Abstract***

Improvements to urban land management are needed to mitigate declines in pollinator abundance and diversity. To inform effective urban land management choices, there is a need to identify the habitat enhancement strategies that best support long-term pollinator community growth. Particularly, to favour positive long-term trajectories, it is important that we can choose enhancement strategies that encourage interannual colonization and persistence of pollinators, including for more specialized species which may be of higher conservation concern. To compare the effectiveness of woody flowering plant enhancements and herbaceous meadow enhancements for long-term pollinator conservation, we conducted 334 wild bee and hoverfly surveys across a span of three years in eighteen urban parks located in Vancouver, Canada. We applied a multi-species Bayesian occupancy model that, while accounting for imperfect detection in the sampling process, allowed us to determine the effects of species dietary specialization and variation in amount and type of flower resources (and the interactions between environment and species specialization) on interannual pollinator population transitions. First, we found that specialized species were less likely to occur initially and had comparatively lower colonization rates. Interannual persistence was high across parks and across the range of species specialization levels. We found that increased herbaceous flower resources in parks were associated with higher baseline species occurrence, however, herbaceous flower resources had little impact on subsequent interannual colonization. In contrast, parks enhanced with more flowering tree and shrub resources were more likely to continue to recruit new species across years, particularly through colonization of specialized species (positive interaction). Consequently, community size (species richness) is only projected to increase through time in parks with a high availability of flowering trees and shrubs. The results of this study indicate that focusing on perennial shrub and tree amendments (especially including native species) is more effective for pollinator conservation than concentrating on enhancement of flowering herbaceous plants (i.e., through reduced-mow initiatives and/or wildflower meadow plantings).

***Introduction***

There is growing evidence that pollinators, valued particularly for the ecosystem services that they provide, are facing global declines (Wagner etc). (). Urbanization may contribute to these pollinator declines because urban lands often characterized by unhospitable impervious surfaces that prohibit nesting of numerous species () and reduce surface area for the flowering plant resources that pollinators require for food. Other aspects of the urban environment such as urban pollution, urban warming, elevated disease and/or elevated competitive pressure from introduced pollinator species may further limit pollinator health and survival in urban landscapes (). To mitigate pollinator declines and to maintain pollinator services (pollination in urban systems and presence of nature in spaces where people can interact) it is important that we design urban habitats that promote long-term pollinator conservation. Currently, the area of developed greenspace in an urban landscape is not associated with pollinator occurrence (), suggesting that there is room to design urban park spaces in a more effective way.

Because flower resources provide food in the form of nectar and pollen, increased flower resources in urban parks and other urban greenspaces is expected to help pollinators (). Many recent studies show that increased flower resources in urban lands is associated with increased indicator measurements of pollinator biodiversity. These gains could, however, be due to transient movement of individuals, for example, with pollinators moving in to forage from the provided resources, without any substantial gains in the number of pollinators in the landscape if the provided resources don’t enhance survival or reproductive output (). Flower resource enhancements could even act as an ecological trap if they are attractive but provide lower value pollen and nectar compared to other plants in the surrounding landscape ().To inform effective conservation strategies with long-term pollinator benefits, we need multi-year studies that tell us whether and what types of management strategies encourage population dynamics that lead to stable or growing pollinator communities.

Different types of management strategies are being implemented – herbaceous flower enhancements versus addition of flowering trees and shrubs. Limited info on which is best.

Species specialization – habitat selection.

Intro to the methods. Additionally, studies with low-temporal replication that compare abundance and diversity across point-count surveys may not be able to disentangle the effects of the environment or species traits on detection versus ecology (). For example, simultaneous effects of flower resource enhancements on the detectability of pollinators may confound estimates for the effects of flower resource enhancements on the actual number of individuals or species that are present (). Alternatively, specialized or rare species may be more difficult to detect thereby causing us to underestimate where and when they occur (). Maybe some allusion to similar studies in agricultural landscapes (poinisio and mgonigle).

With the explicit goal of creating improved habitat for pollinators and other forms of wildlife, the city of Vancouver (Vancouver, Canada) initiated a large-scale reduced mow meadow program in a subset of its urban parks beginning in 2020. This experimental management program resulted in parks with a spectrum of different herbaceous flower resource levels. We surveyed plant and pollinator communities for multiple years in parks with the reduced mow management as well as in similar parks that did not receive the experimental management to test the effect of annual average herbaceous flower abundance of a site on pollinator metacommunity dynamics. Simultaneously, we collected data on the tree and shrub flower resource availability within each park site, allowing us to compare the effect size of increasing annual average tree and shrub flower resources against the effects of increasing herbaceous flower resources. We anticipated that both resource sources would increase pollinator colonization and persistence. By examining the effects on system dynamics (not simply comparing snaphsot estimates of abundance or diversity of pollinators) we aimed to project the trajectory of pollinator communities in sites with different types and levels of flower resource enhancement. With this work we aimed to identify whether enhancement strategies that are most effective for long-term pollinator conservation so that we could inform future management decisions both within our city and more broadly. By incoproating information about pollinator diet breadth we aimed to both understand how generalizable species traits impact the way that pollinator species navigate the spatial and temporal landscape in a human dominated system and moreover whether the recommended conservation management strategies benefit species of highest conservation concern.

**Methods**

***Data collection***

**Site selection –**

We selected eighteen parks for multi-year monitoring. Half of the parks (nine parks) received a reduced mowing management regime, where traditionally intensively managed lawn space was left unmowed (or mowed only one to two times) from April – August of each year. No-mow areas constitute a portion (~0.75 – 2 hectare areas for the sites we selected) of the larger area of each park. These herbaceous flower enhancements were initiated in 2020 by the City of Vancouver (Vancouver, BC) with the explicit goal of creating semi-natural habitat that supports urban wildlife – including pollinators. These areas were also seeded with a mix blend of wildflower species (list species in supplement). The other nine parks were mowed ~biweekly during the spring and summer season. The management manipulations resulted in a gradation of variation in flowering plant resources that was subsequently surveyed and quantified and provided an opportunity to test the effects of a continuous range of herbaceous plant flower resources – from what we expected to be generally low in the biweekly mowed and unseeded sites along a continuum to the least mowed and most effectively seeded sites.

To isolate the impacts of park specific flower resources on pollinators we standardized our sites to limit the impacts of other potential confounds. We limited the influence of landscape context on by selecting park sites within low-medium density neighborhoods with low variation in the amount of impervious surface cover or tree cover within 1km radius of the central survey point of each park (supplement). We chose parks of approximately similar size with the total park space ranging from \_ to \_, with one park that was larger (Queen Elizabeth park) (supplements). Parks that received a reduced mowing treatment did not have significantly different proportion of impervious surface or tree cover in the surrounding landscape and were not on average larger than the parks that were mowed biweekly (supplement). We randomized our site selection with respect to mowing management from the east to west side of the city (supplement) to reduce potential confound of consequences of socieoeconomic status which may be spatially correlated and may mediate the quality of resources or management invested in a park or surrounding neighborhood greenspace (cite). To ensure intra-annual site independence we chose sites that were at least 1km distance from the nearest site (the upper end of a typical wild bee foraging ranges) (supplement). Overall, these controls reduced variation between park sites outside of flowers in lawn/meadow space and/or the curated trees and shrubs within the park space. Maybe put together a landscape style figure that shows some of these things?

Figure – site locations and pictures of site habitats – and woody perennial flower resources?

**Plant surveys**

We visited the 18 selected parks 6 times per year for 3 consecutive summers (2021, 2022, and 2023) to survey the plant and pollinator communities. We conducted two different plant community surveys on each visit. First, we surveyed the herbaceous plant community in the reduced mow area or analogous lawn space (what the meadow would have looked like if not mowed) with the intention of quantifying the outcome of management on variable plant community trajectories that we suspected would be linked to pollinator community trajectories. We tagged a gps point in our first year of the study near the center point of a 1 hectare area of the park containing reduced meadow or an analogous lawn space. We then counted all ‘floral units’ in twenty 1m2 quadrats with quadrats placed every 3 metres in each of 4 axes of a cross (4 transects of 5 quadrats radiating out from the center point). In the case of species with tightly packed inflorescences (Asteraceae, Trifolium, Medicago, …) we counted each inflorescence as a floral unit, otherwise, we counted each flower as one floral unit (). Plants were identified using a regional taxonomic key () supplemented with the park management seeding guide (supplement). If the quadrat following the transect would be placed on a trail, impervious park structure, or under the crown of a tree, we moved to the other side of the obstacle, advanced an additional 1 metre along the transect and then placed the quadrat to continue the transect sampling design. We averaged the flower resource units across the six surveys within each year to get an annual site-specific estimate of herbaceous flower abundance.

We quantified the flower resources offered by shrubs and trees by conducting walking transects through the 1 hectare survey area. We counted all flower units on all trees and shrubs within the survey area using two surveyors to confirm that all trees and shrubs within the site were counted. For tall trees and shrubs that could not be counted directly, we counted the number of floral units on five inflorescences, took an average, and then multiplied by a visual estimate of the number of inflorescences on the tree or shrub. Plants were identified using a combination of a regional taxonomic key () and a city shrub and tree planting guide (). We again averaged the flower resource units across the six surveys within each year to get an annual site-specific estimate of woody plant flower abundance.

We collected pollinator interaction data (see below) and used this data in part to determine whether different plant species counted in our surveys were of potential pollinator value. We filtered out floral units from both the herbaceous flower and woody plant flower data sets if we detected fewer than 5 potential plant-pollinator interactions during the entirety of our study. For example, yellow clover was abundant across sites but has minute (~\_ mm) flowers that we observed insects interacting with a total of three occasions; ornamental *Prunus sp.* trees were also abundant across sites but we never detected an insect interacting with these plants. These suspected low-value plants were filtered out so that we could compare the effect of changes in the abundance of flowers that provide viable pollen and nectar resources.

Finally, we z-scored the annual average (log) abundance of herbaceous flower resources and the annual average (log) abundance of woody plant flower resources to transform our predictors into a measure of how many standard deviations above or below each park is in terms of its flower resources relative to the average park in the sample (Gelman). Thus, the estimates conveyed in our results represent the association between a response variable and an increase in one standard deviation of the predictor (Gelman).

**Pollinator surveys**

We conducted 20-minute pollinator surveys by walking a spiral transect of the 1 hectare survey area in each park, use a sweep net to capture all hoverflies and wild bees that we observed interacting with flowers. We focused on wild bees and hoverflies because… . We only collected pollinators interacting with flowers so that we could simultaneously gather information to later make inferences about species dietary specialization from our pollinator detection data. If we completed the spiral transect before the 20-minute time period ended, we returned to any patches within the 1 hectare survey area where pollinators were observed to be most abundant. The 20-minute timer was paused for vialling and labelling the insects once an insect was securely captured in the net. We also used the timer to limit surveying in one area of the plot (a patch of flowers within arms reach) to a maximum of 2 minutes even if there were remaining uncaptured pollinators within the arms reach patch. This allowed us to ensure that we had enough time to survey across as much of the entire 1 hectare survey area as possible to cover our search across fine scale heterogeneity in the types of plants and pollinators distributed within each hectare survey area.

Pollinators netted during the sampling effort were returned to the lab for under microscopy using taxonomic keys () and reference specimens from the UBC Spencer Entomological Collection. Voucher specimens were deposited in the UBC Spencer Entomological Collection and in the lab collection. For a select number of common species for which female indivisuals are readily identified by eye in the field (*Apis melifera*, *Bombus vosnesenskii, Bombus mixtus, Bombus flavifrons, Bombus nevadensis, Bombus melanopygus, Halictus rubicundus, Agapostemon texanus, Anthidium oblongatum* and *Melissodes microstictus*), we released the female pollinators from our cooler back into the park at the end of the survey period. This was intended to reduce unnecessary lethal sampling and to reduce interference with a separate simultaneous mark-recapture study conducted at these sites. If we were not confident about identifications, we kept the specimen for identification in the lab. We caught and released honey bees during our surveys but did not include them in any of our analyses because there numbers may be driven by the spatial locations of managed hives rather than the local or landscape habitat.

We quantified the diet specialization of each species using the plant interaction collected during our pollinator surveys. Following Ponisio and Mgonigle, we classified dietary specialization using the species-specific “Bluthgen’s d” metric. Bluthgen’s d characterizes the distribution of plant species that a pollinator interacts with relative to the availability of the plants. Pollinators that interact with many plant species approximately in proportion to the relative availability of those plant species are scored as most generalized (low d’), while pollinators that interact with very few plant species even though those plant species have low availability are scored as most specialized (high d’). Bluthgen’s d was calculated using the bipartite package which extracts the .. from a system wide network of interactions. We added interactions from other recent studies that have recorded plant-pollinator interactions for wild bees and/or flies in the Vancouver metro area (do and cite) to the interaction data set before calculating species d’, which allowed us to have a stronger characterization of the full range of choices and relative frequency of choices made by each species reducing the chance that the choices made in our more limited dataset were do to random chance rather than true preference. D’ scores which range between 0 and 1 were z-scored for standardization prior to our analyses.

Statistical analyses

**Results**

**Discussion**

Big ideas

Ending with application implications.

**References**