

Andraca introduces Pollinator Week legislation to help endangered bees

Bill would designate rusty patched bee as the state's official native insect

MADISON — In conjunction with National Pollinator Week, State Rep. Deb Andraca, D-Whitefish Bay, is bringing attention to the endangered rusty patched bumble bee by introducing a bill that would name the species as Wisconsin's native insect.

Part of a pollinator package led by Rep. Lee Snodgrass, D-Appleton, the bill would designate the bee as Wisconsin's official state native insect alongside the honey bee — the current



Andraca

state insect. "The loss of this bee would sting," Andraca said. "Designating the rusty patched bumble bee as the state native insect would raise awareness of its plight across the state. Bumble bees are essential pollinators for some of Wisconsin's most important crops. Wisconsin is one of the few places left where you can still find the Rusty Patched, so it's up to us to take action."

According to a press release, the rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) is a Federally Endangered and Wisconsin Special Concern Species. Prior to being

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listed as endangered in 2017, the species experienced a rapid decline, which some believe may be due to a pathogen and pesticide exposure.

"This wonderful and hard-working pollinator is one of the first species to emerge in early spring, and one of the last to go into hibernation in the fall," the press release adds. "The rusty patched bumble bee gathers pollen and nectar from a wide vari-

ety of Wisconsin's flowering plants throughout the growing season."

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, along with other partners, have also created a recovery plan to conserve the bees.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3pdyfd4> or <https://bit.ly/43GOXQZ>.