

Small Worlds, Big Futures



Reporting from a Pollinator-Powered 2030

YRE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION
2026-2027

Guide for young reporters aged 11-16 years



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Welcome to YRE!

Small Worlds, Big Futures: Exploring Pollinators through YRE

As a Young Reporter for the Environment, you investigate environmental issues that matter where you live, listen to different perspectives, explore solutions, and communicate what you discover.

This theme companion will help you explore the 2026–2027 YRE Competition theme:

Small Worlds, Big Futures: Reporting from a Pollinator- Powered 2030.

Use the [YRE Journey Guides](#) for investigation methods, interviews, reporting, and sharing. This pollinator-themed guide will offer ideas for exploring small worlds in nature and their bigger connections.



What small world could inspire your next YRE story?

A flower that blooms when the sun goes down. A tiny forest growing between paving stones. A seed that travels on the sole of your shoe. An underwater world that glows in the dark. A beetle dusted in pollen.

Look closely, then look wider. Here, the micro view means small details and often-overlooked life; the macro view means the habitats, communities and decisions connected to them. You could explore pollinators, soil life, fungi, seed journeys, or the places that support them. Explain the connection you discover.

Your eyes, a sketch, and a good question are enough to begin. A magnifying glass, microscope, or close-up camera can help if available, but is not needed. **Stop. Look closely. Follow the connections.**

What could small worlds in nature reveal about a future where pollinators, people and the wider living world thrive together? Investigate something happening now and explore what could improve or continue by 2030.

What is pollination?

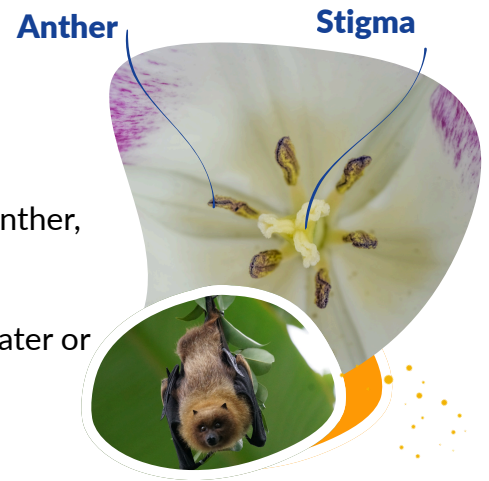
In flowering plants, pollination is the transfer of pollen from an anther, where pollen is produced, to a stigma, the part that receives it.

This can lead to fertilisation, allowing seeds to develop. Wind, water or animals can carry pollen.

People can also transfer it by hand.

Animal pollinators include bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles and some wasps, as well as some birds, bats and other mammals, and even some reptiles.

Which might you discover in your investigation?



Did you know?



Almost 90%

*of wild flowering plant species depend at least partially on animal pollination. (IPBES, 2016)

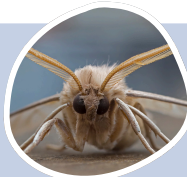
Around 75%

*of the world's food crops depend on pollination to some extent. This links pollination directly to food security, jobs and farmer incomes. (IPBES, 2016)

Surprising places to start



Some tiny midges pollinate cacao flowers. Follow a cacao ingredient from a local shop or kitchen to its growing region. What conditions support its pollinators, and what can a producer actually tell you?



Some moths and nectar-feeding bats pollinate flowers after dark. Which night-flowering plants and visitors occur near you? Ask a local specialist what could support them.



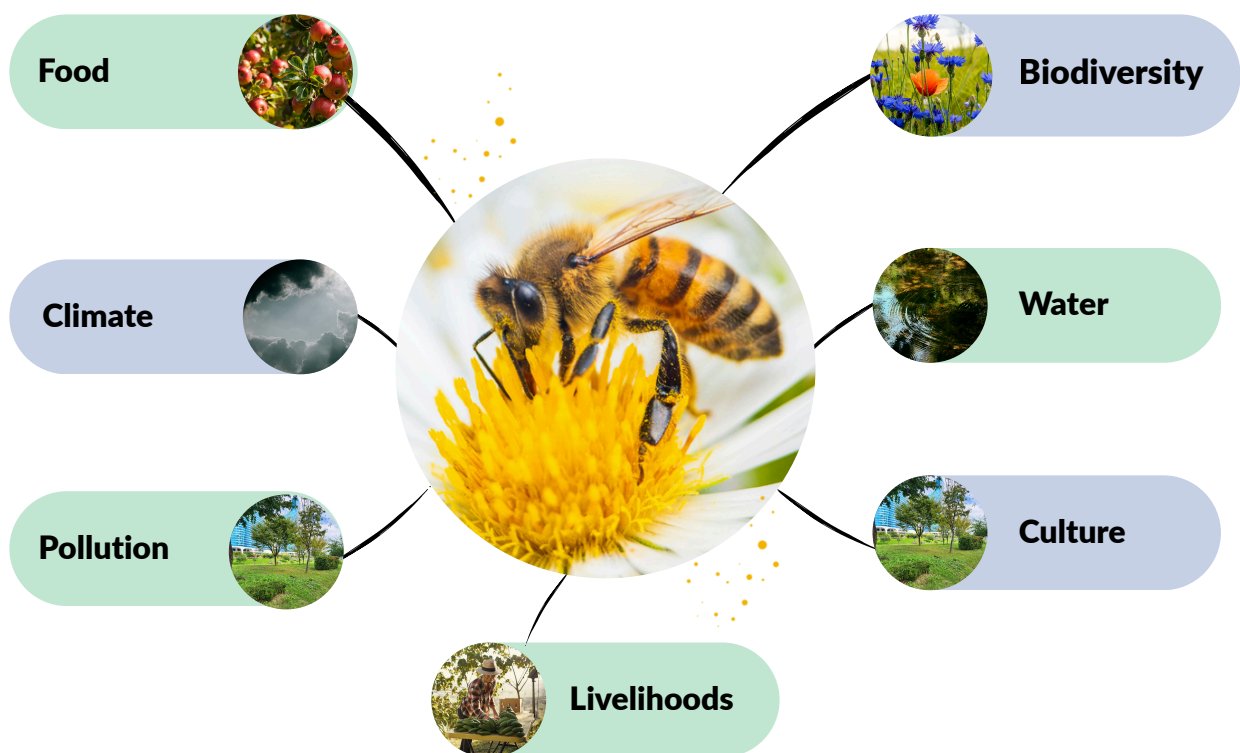
Seagrasses are flowering plants. In experiments on a Caribbean seagrass, researchers in Mexico showed that small crustaceans and marine worms could transfer pollen. This does not mean every seagrass is pollinated by animals. A coastal story could begin with a researcher or local marine group; you do not need to enter the water.

Why pollinator relationships matter

Pollinators connect food, wild plants, biodiversity, and entire food webs. When pollinator populations or relationships change, the effects can reach plants, other animals, and people too.

But pollinators face many pressures, such as habitat loss, some pesticides, land-use change, diseases, invasive species, climate change, and pollution. Your YRE story could explore how people are protecting useful habitats and migration routes, or changing a practice, and what evidence shows about the results.

Follow the connections between pollinators and:



What could you explore?

Your YRE challenge: look closely, then follow the connections

You might start by noticing...



A moth flying near a streetlight at night

How is artificial light changing the relationships between nocturnal pollinators and plants? Could lighting be managed to support them whilst still helping people feel safe at night?



A favourite fruit, spice or drink

What plant does it come from, and how is the plant pollinated?



A tree flowering at an unexpected time

Are changing seasons affecting the timing between plants and their pollinators? Do dated records support this change in flowering time and what could this mean for the pollinators?



A tidy public park - which flowers attract visitors?

Who decides what grows there, when grass is cut, or if leaves are removed? Is a landscape that looks beautiful to people also useful to pollinators?

Did you know?

Not all pollinators are insects. Nectar-feeding bats pollinate plants such as agaves and some wild bananas.





A traditional farm, garden, or landscape cared for across generations

Which relationships between people, plants and pollinators have been maintained, or lost, over time?



The edge of the sports ground

What grows beyond the playing area? Could the margins support small wildlife while keeping the space usable for sport?



Life in a fallen leaf

Some fungi break down dead material and help recycle nutrients. What can you observe in leaf litter without disturbing it, and how is this patch managed? Ask a local specialist about what is too small to see.



A flower with a local name

Ask what its name or a community story reveals about its flowering or visitors. Explore the biological connection separately and respect how the knowledge may be shared.

The invisible connection: when pollution hides a flower's scent

Did you know that air pollution can make it harder for pollinators to find flowers?

Flowers release scents that help pollinators find them. Some air pollutants can change or break down these scents, disrupting this invisible communication. Research on Evening Primrose and hawkmoths found that night-time air pollutants can hide the flowers' scent that moths use to find them.

Could there be an invisible pollinator story in your community?

How might pollution be affecting relationships between plants, pollinators, and people where you live, and what could make these relationships healthier in the future?



Did you know?



**100+
flowers a day.**

A single honeybee may visit several hundred flowers in one day.



STEP 1: INVESTIGATE

Stop, look closely, and follow a connection.
A good YRE pollinator investigation can start with something very small.



Try: Find your own small world

Choose a small area and spend 10–15 minutes simply observing it. Try this somewhere you can observe safely: a street, garden, farm, market, forest edge, beach, park, balcony, tourism space, community garden, or another place in your local area.

Record

- A small detail you can describe: a visitor, leaf pattern, seed, or sign of decay.
- What you can actually see happening. On flowers, note whether visitors touch the pollen-bearing parts.
- The date, time, weather, and how long you watched.
- The wider place around it and a management choice you want to ask about.

You can, for example, write “**small fly**” or sketch something you can’t name. For a flower story, remember that a **visitor is not automatically a confirmed pollinator**. Use research or expert help for processes too small or hidden to observe.

Make one close observation, then look at the wider setting. What could connect them? Use notes, sketches, a tally, or photographs if available. If watching flowers, “no visitors seen during this watch” is valid; a short watch cannot show a population decline.

If an outdoor watch is not possible, start with an existing image, food ingredient, local record, or conversation. For night or marine stories, use existing research or supported observation. Do not lure, handle, or disturb wildlife for a story.



Did you know?



Pollination can happen underwater.



Some aquatic plants, including seagrasses, release pollen into water, where it travels to female flowers.

Optional - Look back: What has changed for pollinators?

Compare an old photograph, dated record or someone's memory with what can be observed now. What do these sources suggest about flowers, visitors or land management? Look for both improvements and losses.

Memories can guide questions but do not establish a trend on their own.

Before



*Old photograph/
dated record/memory*



Now



*What can you
observe now?*

Optional - Map pollinator connections

Put the small thing you noticed in the centre. Connect it to its surroundings and one local choice that affects it. For example, connect a flowering hedge to its insect visitors and the person deciding when it is cut. Or connect fallen leaves to decomposers and how a garden is managed. Use a question mark where a connection still needs checking.

Note: Think in relationships.

Whatever catches your attention, do not look at it on its own. Look at the:

Step 1: Investigate Guide and the Mind-Map exercise



Before moving to Step 2...

Something I noticed: _____

It made me wonder: _____

The connection I want to follow: _____

My investigation question: _____

Before moving on, use **Step 1: Investigate** to refine your question and plan your evidence. Record your choices in the YRE Journey worksheet.

STEP 2: RESEARCH SOLUTIONS

Use the STEP 2: Research & Propose Solutions to plan conversations and compare possible responses. For this theme, you might learn from a grower about flowering, a groundskeeper about mowing, or a local knowledge holder about seasonal relationships. Ask what they have tried, what they observed, and what you can verify.



Listen to different ways of knowing

Who could help you understand your small world?

Depending on your investigation, useful knowledge might come from very different places.

You could speak with:

- A farmer or food grower who notices changes in flowering, harvests, or insect activity.
- A gardener or groundskeeper who knows why a park or school is planted, watered, or mown in a particular way.
- An older community member who remembers how a landscape, season, or species has changed.
- An Indigenous or local knowledge holder who can share knowledge about relationships between plants, animals, seasons, and land, where appropriate and with respect for how that knowledge may be shared.

Choose people who help you understand different parts of the relationship.

Try it: One place, three perspectives

Choose one part of your investigation and ask three different people the same question.

For example, if you are investigating a flowering roadside:

“How should this roadside be managed, and why?”

- Ask a local resident.
- Ask the person responsible for maintaining it.
- Ask someone with ecological knowledge.

Then compare:

- What do they agree on?
- Where do they disagree?
- What does each person notice that the others don't?
- Did anyone make you rethink your original assumptions?



Remember to check your evidence

As you research, keep asking:

Where does this information come from?

Can I confirm it with another reliable source?

Is it recent and relevant to my place?

Am I separating what I observed from what I assume?



Look for a solution already being tried: planting for different flowering seasons, retaining suitable nesting habitat, caring for soil, keeping some leaf litter where appropriate, adjusting mowing or reviewing unnecessary lighting. Choose one to investigate.

Ask what the species and place actually need and how results are being checked. For a pollinator project, a “bee-friendly” label, new hive, or insect hotel is a claim to investigate, not proof of a benefit.

Use **Guide 2's** Solution Check before recommending an approach.

Connect your findings to 2030

RIGHT NOW...

A local practice that is treated as normal is _____

MY EVIDENCE SUGGESTS ...

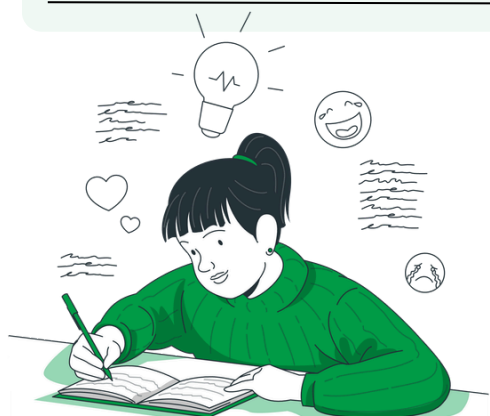
What helps or makes it harder is _____

BY 2030...

Something I would like to see protected, improved, or continued is _____

A POSITIVE STEP TO GET THERE...

What could help, and who would need to be involved _____



Did you know?

Pollination has a night shift.

After dark, some moths, beetles, bats and even nocturnal bees pollinate at night.



STEP 3: REPORT

Turn your small world into a story that matters

Use Step 3: Report to create and check your work. Let a specific discovery introduce the wider story.

It will guide you through:

PURPOSE → **AUDIENCE** → **MESSAGE** → **FORMAT**

These are possible angles, not conclusions to copy:

1 Find the bigger story inside the small one



A moth around a streetlight.

Could lead to a story about how the way a community lights its streets affects night-time ecosystems and local testing for better alternative lighting for night-time wildlife.



A memory of seeing more butterflies.

Could lead to a story about how the local landscape has changed across generations, and a community working together to bring back suitable flowering plants.

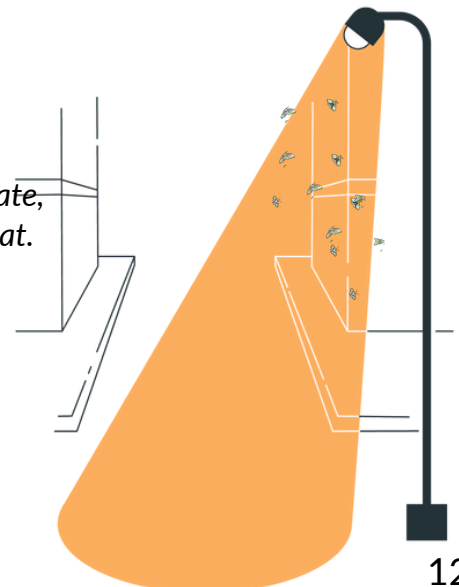
2 Decide what you want your communication to do

Before thinking about format, think about purpose.

Do you want people to:

- Notice a relationship they normally overlook?
- Understand why a local change matters?
- Question something they currently consider “normal”?
- Hear knowledge or perspectives that are often missing?
- Understand how a small local change connects to a bigger environmental issue?
- Recognise a solution that is already working?
- Rethink how a place is managed?
- Support a particular change?
- Make a decision?

First decide what you hope will happen because you communicate, and use that purpose to guide the audience, message, and format.



3 Who needs to hear your story?

Your audience should connect to what your investigation revealed.
If you investigated...

Artificial light and
nocturnal pollinators

Residents? Businesses? Hotel managers? A
municipality?

Changing local ecological
knowledge

Other young people? Families? Community
organisations? Local media?

You might have several audiences. That is fine. Remember, one investigation can generate different communications for different audiences.

4 Choose the format that fits the story

Ask:

What does my audience need to see, hear, understand, or experience?

If the power of your story is...

A visible contrast

Could photography show it best?

Someone's experience or
knowledge

Would hearing their voice make a podcast or
video powerful?

A complex chain of causes
and evidence

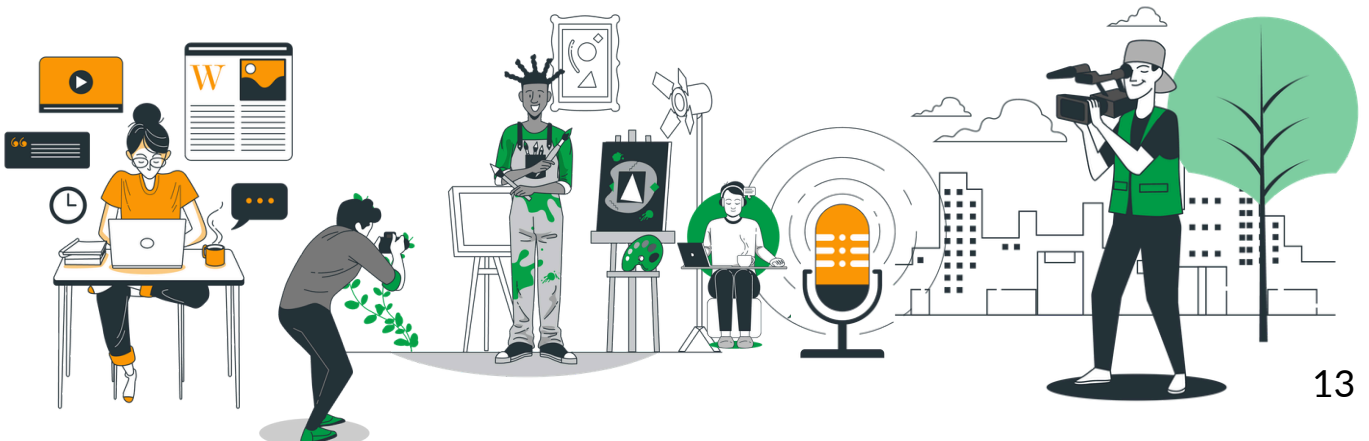
Would an article allow you to investigate it
properly?

Something happening
quickly in a public place

Could short-form video make people stop and
notice?

A story that needs people
to experience or participate
in it

Could an exhibition, illustration, interactive
piece, public installation, or another creative
format communicate it better?



Before moving to Step 4...

Complete your communication plan: use the Step 3: Report guide to support you in this process.

PURPOSE

I am communicating because I want to _____

AUDIENCE

The people I most need to reach are _____

MESSAGE

If they remember one thing, I want it to be _____

FORMAT

The best way to communicate this could be _____

BECAUSE

This format works for my purpose and audience because _____

STEP 4: DISSEMINATE

Share your findings

You have investigated a small world, uncovered its wider connections and created a communication with a clear purpose and audience.

Now make sure the people who need to encounter your story actually do.

Dissemination is more than uploading your work or submitting it to the YRE Competition. It means taking your communication to the places and people where it can start a conversation, challenge what is considered normal, influence a decision, or inspire change.



Go back to your purpose

Remember the audience you identified in Step 3.

Ask:

- Where can I actually reach them?
- Who already has their attention?
- Could I bring my findings directly to them?
- What would I like them to think, discuss, decide or do?

The most successful dissemination is not necessarily the one that reaches the most people. It is the one that reaches the right people for your purpose.



Try it: Map who could help your story reach people

Think about three groups:



One person or organisation might fit into several groups.

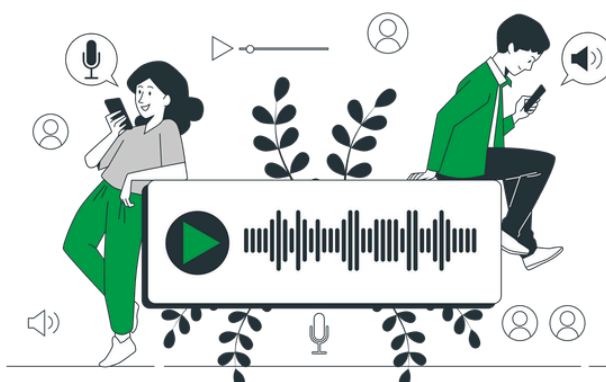
The person or group I most want my communication to reach is _____
because _____

Don't just share it - start a conversation.

Whenever possible, give your audience a way to respond.

You could invite your audience to a discussion, request a meeting, ask a decision-maker to respond to your findings, organise an exhibition or workshop, or return to someone you interviewed with what you eventually discovered.

Use **YRE Guide STEP 4: Disseminate and Reflect** for your sharing plan, follow-up, and record of responses.



Optional: Change Starts with... a Pollinator Assembly

Invite a few local people to discuss one finding from your YRE report and one possible solution. Include people connected to the issue, such as other young reporters, a farmer, local market vendors, or people who manage a community space. You do not need a large event or high-profile person to attend in order to have an impact.

The goal is to use what you discovered to start a conversation and secure one public commitment to protect a living connection in your community.

Use the four Pollinator Assembly questions:

- 1** What living connection is our community overlooking?
Pollinators, night wildlife, water, fungi, food systems, green spaces, or another connection your investigation revealed?
- 2** What is one thing our community has treated as normal that is making life harder for pollinators and connected ecosystems?
- 3** What clear action that would help pollinators could we commit to?
- 4** Looking towards 2030: What should young people be learning and leading to protect the living connections that support food, nature, culture, coastlines and climate resilience?

Note: One investigation can travel in different ways. If something useful happens afterwards, share a short “what happened next” update with verified details. Give credit to the people involved and be clear about what is still uncertain.

REFLECT: What happened because you communicated?



After sharing your work, pay attention to what happens next.

REACH

Did the people I wanted to reach actually receive my communication?

☐

RESPONSE

Did anyone reply, ask questions, share it or discuss it?

☐

LEARNING

Did someone tell me they noticed or understood something differently?

☐

CONVERSATION

Did my story bring people together or start a discussion?

☐

ACTION

Did someone make a commitment or do something differently?

☐

LOOKING TOWARDS

2030

What did your small world help you see?

Your YRE journey may have started with something easy to overlook: an insect visiting a flower, a change in when a plant blooms, a memory from an older community member, a crop at a market, a patch of roadside vegetation, or what happens in a park after dark.

But by following the connections around it, you may have discovered a much bigger story.

Take a moment to look back. Think about where you started and where your investigation took you.

I STARTED BY NOTICING...

I DISCOVERED IT WAS CONNECTED TO...

SOMETHING I LEARNED ABOUT HOW THIS PLACE USED TO BE...

A CHANGE I NOW UNDERSTAND DIFFERENTLY...

A PERSON OR PERSPECTIVE THAT CHANGED HOW I SAW THE ISSUE...

SOMETHING THAT IS ALREADY WORKING OR GIVES ME HOPE...

Now imagine this place in 2030

How old will you be in 2030? Imagine returning to the place you investigated. What small detail and what wider change would show that this living world is thriving or has been protected? Use a sentence, a sketch or a spoken description, and explain the evidence behind your hope.

 **By 2030, I would like it to be normal that...**



One final challenge: keep noticing

Pollinators can teach us something bigger than pollination.

They remind us that much of what keeps a place alive happens through relationships: between organisms, between people and nature, between generations, and between the choices we make today and the world we will live in tomorrow.

As a Young Reporter, your next story could begin with something in nature everyone else walks past. **What will you help people notice next?**

