

BEE POPULATIONS IN DECLINE.

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The next time you see a bee buzzing around, remember that much of the food we eat depends significantly on natural insect mediated pollination – the key ecosystem service that bees and other pollinators provide. Without insect pollination, about one third of the crops we eat would have to be pollinated by other means, or they would produce significantly less food. Up to 75% of our crops would suffer some decrease in productivity. Bees are the predominant and most economically important group of pollinators in most geographical regions. Managed honey bees have been suffering increasingly in recent years, even as the world moves progressively towards growing more crops that are dependent on bee pollination.

Many people believe that our increasing use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, which honeybees ingest during their daily pollination rounds, are largely to blame. It may be that the build-up of both synthetic chemicals and genetically modified crop pollen has reached a “tipping point,” stressing bee populations to the point of collapse. Bee populations may also be vulnerable to other factors, such as the recent increase in atmospheric electromagnetic radiation as a result of growing numbers of cell phones and wireless communication towers. The increased radiation given off by such devices may interfere with bees’ ability to navigate. A small study at Germany’s Landau University found that bees would not return to their hives when mobile phones were placed nearby. Further research is currently underway in the U.S. to determine the extent of such radiation-related phenomena on bees and other insect population.

Biologists also wonder if global warming may be exaggerating the growth rates of pathogens such as the mites, viruses and fungi that are known to take their toll on bee colonies. The unusual hot-and-cold winter weather fluctuations in recent years, also blamed on global warming, may also be wreaking havoc on bee populations accustomed to more consistent seasonal weather patterns.

So how can we protect our beloved bees? Nine things we can do to help save bees: Stop using insecticides; Plant Bee-friendly plants; Create natural habitat gardens; Find out more about bees; Support your local beekeepers; Make you own 'Wild bee' house; Become a beekeeper; Sign petitions banning pesticides; Encourage your local authority to do more to help bees.

In addition, you can find a lot of information about bees on the website of BeABee organization. The mission of BeABee is to raise awareness of the global disappearance of bees.