

Bees in Peril: A Timeline

Kara, selected from *TreeHugger*

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Read more: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/bees-in-peril-a-timeline.html#ixzz2YK7MupR9>

A dramatic drop in bee populations began in 2005, and a number of factors continue to create problems for this key pollinator to this day. Here is a history of the issue.

2005

Bees populations had been in decline before 1997, but in 2005 a steep drop-off began raising alarms among environmentalists and the agricultural workers who depend on honeybees to pollinate crops such as almond and fruit trees. This set off a “pollinator panic” that led to bees being imported to the U.S. from New Zealand for the first time in 50 years.

2007

The populations of bees continued to decline, with some apiaries reporting losses of 30 to 70 percent in different regions of the U.S. The phenomena came to be known as colony collapse disorder and a number of potential causes were debated. Pesticides were a primary suspect from the beginning, but viruses, invasive mites, fungus, cell phone signals and climate change were also discussed as possible factors.

Beekeepers in the U.K. and Europe also reported significant losses in their colonies.

2008

Research into the causes of colony collapse disorder

continues to focus on pesticides, although many questions remain. The Natural Resources Defense Council files lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency for unpublished information about a pesticide made by Bayer CropScience. The suit eventually led to the publication of the missing Federal Register documents.

2009

Because of bees importance in the human food chain, campaigns to “Save the Bees” pick up momentum. In the U.K., the Plan Bee campaign launched to demand government action, including money to research colony collapse disorder. As part of the campaign, The Co-operative, the largest co-op grocery chain in the country, bans the use of neonicotinoid-based pesticides sold in stores.

Another campaign launched by Haagen-Dazs and ExperienceProject.com used social media to promote awareness about the problem.

France, Germany and Italy suspend the use of neonicotinoids as a “precautionary measure.”

2011

The U.K. reported another bad winter for bee populations, with losses as high as 17 percent in some parts of the the country.

Work conducted by Jeff Pettis at the US Department of Agriculture found that bees often attempt to seal off cells in their combs prior to hives dying off. Pettis suggested that this defense mechanism is an effort to protect the hive from contaminants, but a direct link between pesticides and this entombing process was not established.

Research suggested that many of the hypothesized causes of colony collapse may be working together, rather than a single factor. Professor May Barenbaum warned against any single, simplistic arguments about the cause the bee population decline.

2012

Research connecting neonicotinoid pesticides and colony collapse was published. One study showed a link between pesticide-treated seeds and bee death, another paper showed that the ban on neonicotinoids in Italy led to fewer bee deaths. Other causes



of bee death continued to be explored as contributing factors, such as viruses and hive-destroying mites. One study found that pesticides make bees more vulnerable to viruses. However, pesticides makers pushed back on the findings, and Bayer CropScience creates “bee care centers” to further their own research.

In both Europe and the U.S., activists sought regulatory measures banning pesticides and promoting bee populations. A petition promoted by AVAAZ for the global ban on neonicotinoid pesticides gained 1.2 million signatures. The campaign is still going on today, and has gathered over 2.5 million signatures.

In the U.K., environmentalists fail to win a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides and accused Parliament of turning a blind eye on the problem. In the U.S., the Environmental Protection Agency has begun a review process of neonicotinoids and several other pesticides, but the results of such a review may take

several years.

2013

This spring, environmentalists celebrated a win when the European Union voted in a two-year ban on neonicotinoid pesticides. In the U.S., results of the EPA review are still pending. In the meantime, Bayer is working hard to give itself a pro-bee facade by distributing wildflower seeds with bottles of pesticides.

The journal *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* published a meta analysis, showing that there are multiple ways that bees may be exposed to pesticides. The authors of this study conclude that “pollinator-friendly alternatives” are urgently needed.

Although progress towards protecting bees from pesticides is slow, awareness about the threat to bees seems to be on the rise. In June, thousands of bees found dead in a Target parking lot became national news. Preliminary findings point to the use of the neonicotinoid-based pesticide Safari, which was sprayed on nearby Linden trees.

There are a number of ways to get involved with the fight to save the bees, including regional and local efforts.

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7 Simple Ways To Help Honey Bees

Eve Fox
May 19, 2013



The bad news is that our honey bees are dying. U.S. bee keepers lost a shocking 31% of their hives this winter, as they have for the past seven years in a row. Although the exact causes of Colony Collapse Disorder are not 100% certain, what is crystal clear is that we're speeding towards the disastrous point at which we will not have enough bees to pollinate our crops.

The good news is that there are a number of easy (even enjoyable) ways YOU can help honey bees to survive and, hopefully, to thrive. And none of them involve rushing out to buy protective mesh clothing and a smoke can!

Here are seven simple ways to help out our favorite pollinators.

1. Add your name to the petition urging the EPA and USDA to ban neonicotinoids, a widely used class of agricultural pesticides that is highly toxic to bees and believed to play a crucial role in colony collapse disorder. The EU has just enacted a ban on neonicotinoids and we must follow Europe's lead as there is literally no time to waste.



2. Let dandelions and clover grow in your yard. Dandelions and clover are two of the bees' favorite foods – they provide tons of nourishment and pollen for our pollinators to make honey and to feed their young (look at this bee frolicking in a dandelion below – like a pig in shit!) And these flowers could not be any easier to grow – all you have to do is not do anything.

3. Stop using commercial pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers – these chemicals are harmful to the bees. And they're also harmful to you, your family, and our soil and water supply, too. Definitely not worth it!



Stop using RoundUp - a toxic weed killer

4. Eat more honey and buy it from a local bee keeper. This is a pretty sweet way to help the bees (sorry, I can never resist a good pun.) Unlike big honey companies, local bee keepers tend to be much more concerned about the health of their bees than they are about their profits. And their products do not have to travel far to reach your kitchen, either.



You can almost always find local honey at your farmers' market and it may also be available at your local health food or grocery store. It may cost a little more than the commercial options, but it's well worth it.

5. Plant bee-friendly flowers. This not only helps the honey bees, it will also make your yard more beautiful and can also provide you with a bunch of great culinary herbs.



In addition to the dandelions and clover I mentioned above, bees love many other flowers, including: bee balm, borage, asters, lavender, thyme, mint, rosemary, honey suckle, poppies, sunflowers, marigolds, salvia, butterfly bush, clematis, echinacea (see the bee partaking of some coneflower goodness below) blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, fennel, yellow hyssop, milkweed, goldenrod, and many more.

You can also just buy one of those pre-mixed packets of wildflowers with good results. And, if you're ever in doubt, choose native plants as they will be best suited to the climate you live in and can help support the bees throughout the season.

7 Buy organic. Organic food and fibers like cotton and hemp are produced without the use of commercial pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides, making them inherently more bee-friendly than conventionally grown products. USDA Organic label

7. Share this post with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers to help build more “buzz” for honey bees.

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