

# What You Need to Know About Bees and How You Can Help to Protect Them

Bees are extraordinary creatures that exist in all types of climates around the world, from forests in Europe to deserts in Africa, and even in the Arctic Circle. Unlike honeybees and their hives, wild bees in the U.S. live in many different places: under the ground, in holes, and in trees.

For much of the past ten years, beekeepers, primarily in the United States and Europe, have been reporting annual hive losses of 30 percent or higher, substantially more than is considered normal or sustainable. In fact, one in four wild bee species in the U.S. is at risk of extinction.

Worldwide bee populations are in decline, including the honey bee and many of our wild native bees. One example: The yellow-banded bumble bee was the most abundant bumble bee in northern Wisconsin in the mid-1990s, then within ten years it made up less than 1% of the state's bumble bee population. In Oregon, Franklin's bumble bee has likely gone extinct during the same period.

## Why We Need to Protect Bees

- Plants need bees to pollinate, making bees indispensable pollinators of most ecosystems. There are 369,000 flowering plant species, and 90% of them are dependent on insect pollination. A honeybee can usually visit 50-1000 flowers in one trip; if a bee takes ten trips a day, a colony with 25,000 forager bees can pollinate 250 million flowers in a day.
- Bees are a keystone species, with other species dependent on them to survive. Many species of animals depend on bees for their survival because their food sources, including nuts, berries, seeds, and fruits, rely on insect pollination.
- Pollination not only makes food available for other organisms but also allows floral growth, which provides habitats for animals, including other insects and birds.
- As pollinators disappear, the effect on the health and viability of crops and native plant communities can be disastrous. We simply cannot survive without bees.
- Pollinators contribute billions to the world economy. The global crop production pollinated by bees is valued at \$577 billion. Pollinators contribute \$24 billion to the U.S. agriculture industry, making up a third of the food consumed by Americans.

## Threats to Bee Species

- Widespread use of pesticides, neonicotinoids and GMOs
- Climate change
- Loss of habitat, including land use changes, habitat fragmentation, loss of bio-diversity
- Bees forced into service; monoculture
- Pests, diseases, viruses, and mold

## Actions You Can Take to Help Us Protect Bees

- Urge your Congress representative to pass the [Pollinator Recovery Act](#) and to protect the [Endangered Species Act](#).
- Support a ban [on the use of pesticides](#), especially neonicotinoid pesticides.
- Plant a bee-friendly garden.