



Robert Fisk: Afghan strategy has been tried before – without success

Warning over honeybee decline

By Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

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MPs have accused the Government of showing little interest in the problem of Britain's disappearing honeybees.

Bees are estimated to be worth £200m a year to the economy for their vital role in pollinating many of the crops grown in the UK.

But despite the fact that bee colonies are rapidly vanishing, ministers are giving little priority to the problem, warned members of the all-party House of Commons Public Accounts Committee.

Research spending on bee health should be ring-fenced, the MPs said, and not, as now, be part of more general research on pollinating insects. Furthermore, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) should take steps to ensure more beekeepers register with it, thereby subjecting themselves to inspection. At present registration is voluntary.

"Honeybees are dying and colonies are being lost at an alarming rate," said Edward Leigh, the Tory chairman of the committee. "This is very worrying, and not just because the pollination of crops by honeybees is worth an estimated £200m each year to the British economy. So it is difficult to understand why Defra has taken so little interest in the problem up to now.

"Additional money for research into honeybee health has been announced, but the focus will include all pollinating insects," Mr Leigh added. "We need to know what proportion of the funding is to be ring-fenced specifically for research into the causes of the decline in honeybee numbers."

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BEES

swimmerpaul wrote:

Tuesday, 14 July 2009 at 02:05 am (UTC)

I have noticed a lot of bees this year i hope its not a sign of things to come. And i hope the scientist find out whats making the Bees disappear.

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bees

imgunner wrote:

Tuesday, 14 July 2009 at 06:18 am (UTC)

I have seen a fair few bees but most of them have been bumble bees not honey bees, despite the fact that there are three hives less than half a mile away.

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Member

A beekeepers opinion on the loss of honeybees

 **berserkerboy** wrote:

Tuesday, 14 July 2009 at 06:44 am (UTC)

Bees are disappearing because of a number of reasons. In my opinion these are the most likely:

Loss of forage due to industrialised farming.

Systemic pesticides especially, but other pesticides, herbicides and fungicides.

Not enough beekeepers.

Beekeepers taking too much honey and resorting to feeding their bees sugar and artificial pollen.

Imagine a world without the foods we take for granted. Carrots, peas, onions, etc, rely on bees as well as all our orchard fruits. If bees go then we will follow soon thereafter. I would say that is enough reason to invest a bit of money in bee research!

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Member

Bees

 **lizzyopines** wrote:

Tuesday, 14 July 2009 at 02:11 pm (UTC)

I am not a scientist but I do observe a lot of nature and read as much as I can on the subject. My PERSONAL belief is that all the hybridized fruits and vegetables do not send out the scents or what ever attracts the bees. I pass mounds of beautiful flowers and never see one bee or even one bug for that matter. The plants are bred for disease resistance and multiple blooms and do look gorgeous but it all presents a very sterile image of nature. I am seeking to only plant non hybridized/heirloom varieties of plants in my yard hoping to attract bees.

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Member

Complex but solvable

 **richardjeff** wrote:

Tuesday, 14 July 2009 at 03:02 pm (UTC)

I would not expect a typical MP to be up on honey bee issues but the DEFRA scientists, or rather their management hierarchy has failed to highlight and recommend adequate policy in this area. Though the causes need to be researched it is most likely a combination of viral infection of bee colonies, stimulated by climate change. Bees are possibly more sensitive to even quite small temperature and humidity changes. Insecticides, changed cropping, destruction of wild meadow, etc, all will have an effect. I actually live in the Sierra de Aracena which is renown for its honey. Though they too have seen a decline in bee numbers recently they still remain robust due to the proliferation of wild flowers and minimal use of pesticides, fungicides, etc.

A solution might be the leaving of greater wild margins around field, the reintroduction of destroyed hedgerows and the encouragement of scrub lands. Couple this with reduction in pesticides and fungicides the balance might be restored.

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Member

Key to our existence

 [goecostore](#) wrote:

Wednesday, 15 July 2009 at 07:45 am (UTC)

I don't pretend to be an expert on bees or nature but when my teenage daughters ask me about the problem with bees then you start to wonder about our fragile existence on this planet. Our activities have caused massive underlying problems which need reversing now, honey bees is just one of them ...

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