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Disappearance Of Bee Population Bad News For Us

One-Third Of Human Food Requires Pollination; Scientists Think Pesticides May Play Big Role In Problem



CHESTER, N.J. (CBS) — Bees are dying all over the world.

Good riddance you say to those little things that sting?

Reporting
[Don Dahler](#)

Wrong. It's a big problem -- for you. One third of everything you eat requires pollination by bees.

Beekeeper Janet Katz recently opened up her hives for the first time since winter. And the Chester, N.J., resident found nothing but dead bees.

"It was a hive that I raised queens from. And you can see the bees are all up in the top. Obviously they didn't make it," Katz said.

Colony after colony, there was not a single living bee.

"These bees look like they starved to death," Katz said. "It's pretty grim."

It's very grim. Two years ago, 83 percent of the New Jersey bee population survived. Last year only 65 percent lived through the winter. And this year is expected to be at least as bad if not worse.

Why is this happening?

Worldwide, bees are under attack from every side -- mites, parasites and harsh winters take their toll.

One of Katz's colonies was wiped out by a bear.

"You can see the bear's claw marks," Katz said.

But scientists are also focusing on new kinds of pesticides used to kill weeds or pests, called systemic pesticides, which enter a plant's system, are absorbed into the pollen, and which don't kill the bees outright but may be affecting the queen's fertility, causing the population to plummet.

"We're looking at pesticides just like we're looking at poor nutrition or parasitic mites as contributing to the overall decline in bee health," said Jeff Pettis of the USDA.

And that perfect lawn you're so proud of? It's killing bees, too. Those weeds are part of their food supply.

"Dandelions are one of the first flowers in spring that the bees count on to make it through the rough month of March," Katz said, adding if people stop using weed killer in their yards they'll be helping the cause.

"That's why you'll see milkweed and ragweed all over my yard."

Albert Einstein predicted if the bees disappear, all of mankind would perish within four years.

For a list of bee-friendly plants you can grow on your balcony or yard, please click [here](#).



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By some estimates as many of 50 percent of the bee population of New Jersey will not survive 2010. CBS

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