

“Protect Our Species” for Earth Day!



Earth Day is April 22. The theme for this year’s Earth Day is “Protect Our Species”. We all have a responsibility to protect our environment including the land, air, water, and species that share the earth with us.

All living things play a role in this world and have an effect on our daily lives. Many species are threatened or endangered and we must work together to protect them. This includes bees, giraffes, coral reefs, whales, elephants, insects, and many, many more. I’m going to focus on the threat that bees face on a daily basis since bees are well-known to most of us and have a huge impact on our food supply. I’m also extremely passionate about the role of bees because my husband and I have been beekeepers in rural Manitowoc County for the past 7 years.

Bee populations are declining all over the world. Beekeepers in the U.S. and Europe report annual bee hive losses of 30% or more annually. According to www.earthday.org, “The yellow-banded bumble bee was the most abundant bumble bee in northern Wisconsin in the mid-1990’s, then within ten years it made up less than 1% of the state’s bumble bee population.”

• 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.

Some threats to bees include widespread use of pesticides/neonicotinoids, extreme climate changes, loss of habitat and bio-diversity, land changes, diseases, and more.

So what can we do? Think twice before spraying a hive or swarm of bees or killing a bee. Call your local Beekeepers Association and someone can help you determine the type of bee and safely relocate a hive if necessary. Plant flowers and plants that bees and pollinators love. Don’t spray your lawn for dandelions, bees love them! Support your local beekeepers and buy local honey. Do your own research online for more information on how to help bees and pollinators.

“In nature, nothing exists alone.”

— Rachel Carson, 1962

Written By: Alyssa Weber, RDN, CD, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Please note that the information contained in this newsletter is to provide readers with health and diet information, but is not intended to be used as medical advice for individual health problems. Source: www.earthday.org

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