

700+ native bee species spiraling toward extinction

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For such a smart species, humans seem to be sorely lacking in common sense. Is it so difficult to understand that we are all part of a delicately balanced ecosystem that doesn't suffer fools lightly? Take the bees.

The dark fate of European honeybees has been making headlines ever since their precipitous decline came to light in the 1990s. But what about North America's 4,337 native bee species? These mostly ground-nesting bees "play a crucial ecological role by pollinating wild plants and provide more than \$3 billion in fruit-pollination services each year in the United States," explains a new report by the Center for Biological Diversity. They dwell in forests and farms, cities and the wilds; they range from the wee Perdita minima to large carpenter bees.

We need bees to pollinate our plants so that we can have food. More than three-quarters of the world's food crops rely at least



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in part on pollination by insects and other animals, notes the UN, much of that thanks to bees. And now it turns out that more than 700 species of our native bees are in trouble from "a range of serious threats, including severe habitat loss and escalating pesticide use," notes the Center's analyses.

"The evidence is overwhelming that hundreds of the native bees we depend on for ecosystem stability, as well as pollination services worth billions of dollars, are spiraling toward extinction," says Kelsey Kopec, a native pollinator researcher at the Center and author of the study. "It's a quiet but staggering crisis unfolding right under our noses that illuminates the unacceptably high cost of our careless addiction to pesticides and monoculture farming."

Key findings of the report include:

- Among native bee species with sufficient data to assess (1,437), more than half (749) are declining.
- Nearly 1 in 4 (347 native bee species) is imperiled and at increasing risk of extinction.
- Many of the bee species lacking sufficient data are also likely declining or at risk of extinction, highlighting the urgent need for additional research.
- The declines are caused primarily by habitat loss, heavy pesticide use, climate change and urbanization.

“We’re on the verge of losing hundreds of native bee species in the United States if we don’t act to save them,” says Kopec. “Almost 90 percent of wild plants are dependent on insect pollination. If we don’t act to save these remarkable creatures, our world will be a less colorful and more lonesome place.”

Not to mention a world with a lot less food to eat. How short-sighted can we be?

See the whole report here: [Pollinators in Peril: A systematic status review of North American and Hawaiian native bees.](#)

