

Why honey bees are under threat?

Audio transcript for slideshow presented by Chris Packham

Honey bees feature almost weekly in the news.

Headlines reporting on their demise include the dangers pesticides, parasites spreading disease and habitat loss.

Much of the blame is being put on a group of insecticides containing neonicotinoids which affect not just bees but many of our other native invertebrates.

The use of neonicotinoids on flowering crops attractive to bees has now been temporarily banned in Europe.

Meanwhile the parasitic varroa mite is spreading disease; a bite from these mites injects the deadly Deformed Wing Virus into the bees blood and can destroy an entire honey bee colony.

It's been described by scientists studying its effects as one of the most widely distributed and contagious insect viruses on the planet.

All of these factors may be playing a role in the catastrophic Colony Collapse Disorder, which is where very few or no adult honey bees are found in the hive.

This has massive consequences for our food supply and economy, with potential losses reaching billions of pounds.

At the moment not all the reasons that honey bees are under threat are understood.

It seems unlikely that we would lose them forever as most pollinating colonies of honey bees are now managed.

But if the worst were to happen and we lost our honey bees there are ways of filling their pollinating role.

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