

Bee conservation: inclusive solutions

Article

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Bee conservation needs inclusive solutions

In their Perspective “Conserving honey bees does not help wildlife” (26 January, p. 392) J. Geldmann and J. P. González-Varo point out that promoting managed honey bees does not help wild pollinators. We agree that at high densities honeybees can adversely affect wild pollinator populations. However, focusing only on the negative aspects of their interactions may ultimately be counterproductive for both wild and managed pollinators.

Several countries (including Belgium, Denmark, and The Netherlands) have increasingly restricted honey bee access to protected areas based on incomplete evidence for negative impacts on wild pollinators and plants (1, 2). Such restrictions are mostly symbolic acts given that honey bees can forage up to 10 km from their hive and continue to use resources within protected areas even when hives remain outside (3). However, the regulations fuel tensions between beekeepers and conservationists.

A more productive approach would be to promote the suite of pollinators—both wild and managed—that provide pollination services to crops and wild plants (4). A united front of beekeepers and conservation organizations, together representing millions of citizens, is more likely to succeed in driving policy changes and public awareness than different sectors advocating either wild or managed species. New generations of initiatives to promote pollinators such as the Dutch Bee Strategy, the English National Pollinator Strategy, and the International Pollinator Initiative all use this inclusive approach. Furthermore, all of these initiatives include the agricultural and environmental sectors, as well as the private sectors, because only solutions that are supported by all parties can deliver sustainable results.

Whether considering food security, national economies, or nature conservation, we must safeguard both wild and managed pollinators. Arguing that one group is more important than another overlooks the key global challenges and opportunities that wider society needs to address.

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