

A salutary reminder of the consequences for us all in relation to bee health is to be found in the Press Statement released recently by the International Bee Research Association (IBRA) as follows:

International Bee Research Association

The world's longest established apicultural research publishers

PRESS RELEASE

[Immediate 20/04/11]

Award winning paper highlights bee declines

A paper written by a team of researchers from the University of Reading, UK and from around Europe, has been awarded the Eva Crane Award by the International Bee Research Association as the best paper published in its *Journal of Apicultural Research* during 2010.

Honey bees are the most important managed pollinators in Europe and make a significant contribution to the pollination of our food crops and also some wildflower species. Recently there have been many reports that bees have been declining, but it was unclear how big the losses were or how widespread across Europe they were. The researchers took up this challenge and brought together information from 18 European countries to track the changes in the number of honey bee colonies and beekeepers over several decades.

In the Mediterranean they found a small increase in colony numbers, but the main finding was that in central Europe about a quarter of all bee colonies have been lost since 1985. In some countries the losses have been particularly severe, with more than half of colonies lost in England in the same period. The study shows that the trend of losses is expected to continue. It sounds alarm bells for the future reliability of crop pollination and food security.

Lead author Dr Simon Potts says: "This is the first study to quantify the real extent of declines in honey bees across the whole of Europe. Prior to this study, there were a handful of local estimates of honey bee losses and a lot of speculation, but this paper now clearly presents the actual degree of honey bee declines across the whole continent. The health of our pollinators, as documented in our paper, has wide reaching implications for our health and our economy."

A new paper by Dr Potts and his colleagues is published today in the latest issue of the *Journal of Apicultural Research*. The paper describes the major new STEP (Status and Trends of European Pollinators,) Project funded by the European Commission. Dr Potts coordinates STEP which will run for five years and bring together leading researchers in 24 organisations from 21 countries with a budget of £4.3 million. The project addresses the drivers of pollinator loss across Europe and will identify mitigation and adaptation options to reverse declines and improve the management of pollination services across the continent.

IBRA Scientific Director Norman Carreck says: “these two papers are important because they help to both quantify the loss of bee colonies in Europe, and to outline methods of addressing this problem”

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