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The Buzz on Bees
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Help for Honeybees

Bees are disappearing across the United States at an alarming rate.
Meet a sixth-grader who came up with a way to help. **Page 4**

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Mikaila Ulmer with some of the lemonade she created to help save bees



Help for Honeybees

Huge numbers of honeybees are disappearing. Mikaila Ulmer came up with a sweet idea to help get them buzzing again.

When Mikaila Ulmer was 4 years old, she was stung by a bee—twice. It really hurt, but it also made her curious to learn more about bees.

So she did some research, and what she found out surprised her. Mikaila learned that without bees, we wouldn't have many of our favorite foods.

Mikaila also learned that since 2006, tens of millions of bees across the United States have disappeared.

Words to Know

diversity (dih-VUHR-sih-tee) *noun*. variety

infect (in-FEKT) *verb*. to cause harm or disease by introducing germs

Mikaila, who lives in Austin, Texas, thought of a way to help the troubled insects. She started making a lemonade called BeeSweet. It's sweetened with honey instead of sugar.

Now 10, Mikaila sells her lemonade on her website and in stores. She gives some of the money to organizations that are working to keep bees buzzing.

"Bees are important, hardworking, and amazing," Mikaila says. "We need to save them."

Why We Need Bees

As Mikaila learned, honeybees do a lot more than just make honey. They also

transfer tiny grains called pollen from flower to flower, which helps plants reproduce. Bees pollinate about one third of all the world's crops (*see "Follow the Pollen"*). Without these expert pollinators, there could be shortages of many of the foods we eat, like cherries and almonds.

A Bee Problem

Sadly, bees are in big trouble, and farmers are worried. It's normal for some bees to die off each year. But for the past decade, more bees than usual have been vanishing without a trace. Since April of last year, the U.S. has lost more than



Follow the Pollen

Without bees, many plants and trees couldn't produce the fruits and veggies we eat. Here's how a bee pollinates an apple tree.

40 percent of its colonies, or groups, of bees. This problem is known as colony collapse disorder (CCD).

Scientists say there are a few possible causes of CCD. One is likely poor nutrition among bees. Like humans, bees need to eat a variety of foods. They need to drink nectar from many kinds of wildflowers to stay healthy. But in recent years, many of the areas where wildflowers once grew have been cleared for farmland, buildings, and roads.

"These areas just don't have the **diversity** of flowers needed to support honeybees," says Dennis vanEngelsdorp. He is a scientist at the University of Maryland.

Another possible cause of CCD is the use of pesticides. Many farmers spray these chemicals over their fields to get rid of harmful insects. Unfortunately, pesticides can also kill the bees.

Also, tiny insect-like creatures called mites latch onto bees and **infect** them with diseases. Mites have killed millions of bees.

The Latest Buzz

Fortunately, help is on the way. President Barack Obama has created a group called the Pollinator Health Task Force. In May, the group announced a plan to plant wildflowers on 7 million acres of land across the country. (That's an area bigger than the state of Maryland.) The wildflower fields will provide new places for bees to find food.

The government is asking families to help by planting "bee-friendly" flowers at home.

"That's where kids especially can help," says vanEngelsdorp. "We need to make sure that every space possible is filled with different plants."

As for Mikaila, she hopes her business will help bees for many years to come.

—by Lindsay Lowe

1. A honeybee visits a flower to drink a sweet liquid called nectar. It will use the nectar to make honey. The bee also gathers tiny grains called pollen to take back to the hive for food.



2. Some pollen sticks to the bee's body.

3. When the bee visits another flower or tree, some of the pollen on its body rubs off.



4. The transfer of pollen enables the tree to produce fruit, which is full of seeds. These seeds may grow into a new tree one day.



The biggest colonies have about **60,000** bees.

