

June Symposium, Pollination Week, Postage Stamps

The 9th International Pollination Symposium on Plant-Pollinator Relationships - Diversity in Action, is set for Jun. 24-28 at Iowa State University in Ames.

The Symposium is expected to attract worldwide about 300 major scientists, their graduate students, and their postdoctoral fellows. It is being held under the auspices of the International Commission for Plant-Bee Relationships, a commission whose history goes back to 1950.

The theme of the 9th Symposium and the sub-theme topics include a variety of areas that relate to gene flow, transgenes, mating system dynamics, molecular and statistical genetic advances, conservation of plant genetic resources as well as pollinators, gene bank management, and a variety of molecular methodologies utilizing a broad base of genetic information.

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To coincide with the Symposium, the United States Senate passed a resolution designating June 24-30, 2007, as National Pollinator Week.

The resolution recognizes the vital role of pollinators to ecosystem health and agriculture and the value of ongoing public-private partnership efforts

to increase awareness and support for protecting pollinators.

Also, the U.S. Postal Service has announced that it will release four "Pollination" stamps this summer. The stamps consist of four images arranged in two alternate and interlocking patterns. The intricate design of the stamps emphasizes the ecological relationship between pollinators and plants and suggests the biodiversity necessary to ensure the viability of that relationship, according to USPS.



Unfortunately, the stamps do not depict honey bees. They feature four wildflowers and four pollinators: two Morrison's bumble bees, a calliope hummingbird, a lesser long-nosed bat, and a Southern dogface butterfly.

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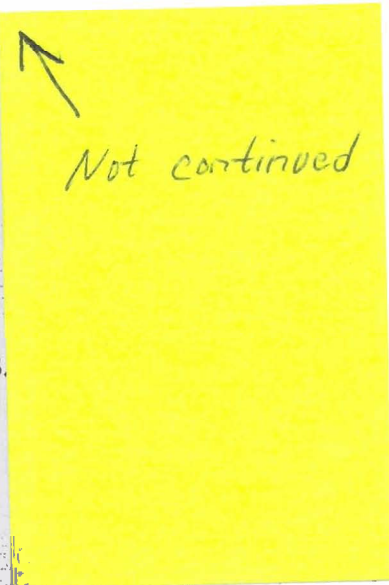
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Colony Collapse Gets Congressional Hearing; Chairman Promises to 'Get to the Bottom of It'

By Troy Fore

Colony Collapse Disorder was the focus of a hearing on Mar. 29 before the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture.

A capacity crowd - including 10-12 media people - heard three scientists, four beekeepers, and an almond grower give their perspectives on CCD. The hearing lasted about two hours. The subcommittee has 11 members, seven of whom were there for some portion of the testimony; several sat through most of the testimony - considered good attendance for a hearing of this sort.

Chairman Dennis Cardoza said the subcommittee is going to follow the CCD mystery to the end - "do everything within our power to get to the bottom of it." He said that finding the cause is imperative "because the industry is too important not to."

The hearing spawned a flood of media attention. It has been run on C-SPAN; all the networks have done pieces, as have most newspapers. The media in attendance also included documentary producers interested in developing a Nova-type program on bees.

"I am deeply committed to raising awareness of CCD and its impact on American agriculture," said Chairman Cardoza in a follow-up press release. "Farmers and beekeepers across the country are dependent on honey bees for their livelihoods. It is imperative that we move swiftly to get to the bottom of this, before the

problem becomes even more serious. The insight and perspectives we heard in today's hearing will be very useful as we consider the next steps in addressing this threat to honey bees, and to the livelihoods of commercial beekeepers and crop producers."

"Honey bee pollination is vital to flowers and many fruit, vegetable, nut and forage crops, as well as forages and flowers. In addition, pollination from honey bees increases yield and food quality and creates billions of dollars of crop value for farmers. Agriculture has a strong interest in maintaining a sound supply of pollinators, and I encourage researchers to work closely with producers to find a solution to the current colony collapse," said Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R-Texas), the subcommittee ranking member.

Formal statements presented by the witnesses are available on the Agriculture Committee website: <http://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/index.html>. A full transcript of the hearing will be posted on the Committee website in 4-6 weeks.

The scientific witnesses were: Dr. Caird Rexroad, associate administrator, USDA-ARS; Dr. Diana Cox-Foster, Professor of Ento-

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ARS Planning 5-Year Project To Improve Honey Bee Health

During his testimony at the CCD hearing, USDA-ARS Associate Administrator Caird Rexroad announced that ARS is undertaking an Areawide Integrated Pest Management Project aimed at producing "healthy bees, no matter what stress they are under."

The areawide projects are normally five-year projects funded at \$1 million. They are also usually awarded to research consortiums (federal, state, and industry) on a competitive basis. Dr. Rexroad was apparently saying there would be a honey bee project, bypassing the competitive aspect. Later, while answering a question from Chairman Cardoza at the hearing, Dr. Rexroad qualified the projects at planned for "as soon as funding is available."

He said the project will focus on migratory beekeeping and major on varroa management, but will include work on other bee parasites, diseases, and predators - such as small hive beetles. Honey bee nutrition will also be a focus.



ABF President Danny Weaver chats with a fellow Texan, Rep. Randy Neugebauer, during a break in the hearing. Mr. Neugebauer is the ranking Republican on the Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture. His district includes Lubbock and Abilene.