

Plight of the honeybees a frightening omen

Joseph F. Doyle



There are a few like Rush Limbaugh who would ridicule the scientific evidence from ice-core samples that go back 850,000 years in an effort to perpetuate the myth that mankind's industrial interference with the environment has been insignificant.

Tell that to the chinstrap penguin, which used to grow as tall as six feet, but is now in danger of extinction because its main food supply, krill, is dying off due to warming ocean temperatures at the South Pole. Krill and other plankton need icy-cold water in order to reproduce; without it, the penguins and other aquatic animals who feed on plankton and/or krill are destined for starvation.

This is a pyramid under construction, building to the collapse of known oceanic ecosystems. Mankind also depends on these oceanic ecosystems; they affect ecological systems on land as well, besides directly providing a large portion of our food supply.

As the oceans warm and the ice shelves melt, the affected areas diminish in their potential to reflect excess heat back into space, causing the warming effect to accelerate. The general warming of the atmosphere melts more

glacial ice, causing the oceans' level to rise, and weather patterns to become relatively more extreme and dangerous.

Precipitation becomes greater where it was less prevalent, and decreases where it was more prevalent. Crop yields on land become more erratic and less dependable; ocean levels rise, causing the salination of coastal fresh water and coastal flooding. Where fresh water was abundant inland, the supply is becoming depleted due to the increasing evaporation of mountain water sources. Also, the amount of microbacteria increases in both the oceanic and land-bound water tables, making the water quality less suitable for life.

The melting of glaciers and mountain snow increases steadily, first causing freshwater flooding, then the slow drying up of existent urban and suburban water sources. This phenomenon is taking place right now in the western United States, Europe, South America, Africa and Asia. Several cities worldwide are gearing up to offset the already measurable depletion of their water supplies.

And then there's the matter of the honeybee.

Albert Einstein once observed that "If honeybees become extinct, human society will follow in four years."

Honeybees pollinate a third of all food crops worldwide. They are essential to the growing of more than 90 of our fruits and vegetables, worth more than \$14.6 billion a year in the United States alone.



So let me familiarize you with Colonial Collapse Disorder or C.C.D., the reason feral (wild) bee-hives are just about gone today, and apicultural (domesticated) beehives are beginning to be infected, in rapidly increasing numbers. If this trend continues unabated, we could be looking at the demise of the honeybee within a few years.

It seems that the honeybee's

immune system is in decline and varroa mites, which the bees formerly could vanquish, are wiping out the migratory honeybee.

Kept bees can be treated for the mites, but the problem is growing. New hives are becoming less successful, or are failing, and as a hive loses its integrity, its inhabitants desert it, leaving behind the queen, a few of her loyal attendants and

her young and unhatched to die.

The helplessness of the queen in her final moments reminds me of the helplessness of the informed United States citizen to get his or her elected and appointed officials to do what they're supposed to do — obey and enforce the law. Some of the most lethal by-products of the degenerating environment due to greenhouse gas overload are the

extinction of plants and animals, more droughts, more floods, excessive temperature swings and outbreaks of disease.

Now that almost everyone has seen the evidence of Earth's collapsing ecosystems and the mood of the public has changed, maybe we can get our own Sen. John Kerry to do his job.

He might, for instance, go after financier Charles Hurwitz who, after receiving a \$1.6-billion gift from taxpayers to bail himself out of the mismanagement of two savings and loans that he controlled, later succeeded in the hostile takeover of Pacific Lumber in Humboldt County, California, which began cutting down the last majestic stand of redwood trees in the northwestern part of the country.

This temperate rain forest has a biomass eight times denser and more diverse than that of any other region on Earth, including the great tropical rain forests. Kerry and his colleagues, who gave Hurwitz a free pass on the savings-and-loan matter, should realize they represent the many, not the few, and address the Hurwitz issue before it's too late for the redwoods and humanity.

Too bad demagogues like Limbaugh, who have the bully pulpit already, are bought and paid for by the special interests who care only about their own enrichment at the expense of the future well-being of the environment and, of course, the human race.

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