

ScienceDaily: The Flight of the Bumble Bee: Why Are They Disappearing?

Written by Chi

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A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientist is trying to learn what is causing the decline in bumble bee populations and also is searching for a species that can serve as the next generation of greenhouse pollinators.

Bumble bees, like honey bees, are important pollinators of native plants and are used to pollinate greenhouse crops like peppers and tomatoes. But colonies of *Bombus occidentalis* used for greenhouse pollination began to suffer from disease problems in the late 1990s and companies stopped rearing them. Populations of other bumble bee species are also believed to be in decline.

Entomologist James Strange is searching for solutions at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Pollinating Insects -- Biology, Management and Systematics Research Unit in Logan, Utah. ARS is USDA's chief intramural scientific research agency, and this research supports the USDA priority of improving agricultural sustainability.

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