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GUEST VIEWPOINT

Oregon bill would protect precious pollinators

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Can you imagine Oregon's landscapes without 90 percent of their flowering plants? That is exactly what could happen if we don't act soon to protect Oregon's pollinators — native bees and butterflies that pollinate flowering plants, trees and crops. Without our wild pollinators, most of our native plants can't yield seed for the next generation.

In the past few decades, many of Oregon's wild pollinators have suffered steep declines and are now among the most elusive species in the entire Pacific Northwest. For example, our Fender's blue butterfly, Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, and even the western bumblebee populations have rapidly disappeared across the state. The Franklin's bumblebee, a native to Southern Oregon, has disappeared altogether.



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There are three reasons our generation is seeing a crunch in pollinator survival.

First, we are destroying crucial pollinator habitat. Secondly, people are indiscriminately spraying highly toxic and systemic neonicotinoid-containing pesticides. Third, bees are becoming more susceptible to diseases and attacks by parasites, mostly likely due to their weakened immune systems caused by pesticide exposure.

As Oregonians, we remember the horror of seeing hundreds of thousands of bumblebees writhing on ground, or already dead, in seven separate incidents of poisonings from neonicotinoid pesticides. One of the worst incidents was here in Eugene after flowering trees were sprayed with neonicotinoids.

Wild pollinators are recognized as a keystone species for a healthy environment. As we continue to lose bees and butterflies, we risk food insecurity, and a complete disruption of ecosystem stability. There is no shortage of recent peer-reviewed research concluding that pesticide use plays a large role in native bumblebee declines around the world. When one foraging bumblebee mother is killed by exposure to a neonicotinoid, her entire nest goes unfed and unprotected. When hundreds of thousands are killed, we've lost an entire generation of native bees in the surrounding area.

What will you say to your grandchildren when they ask you to describe what a bumblebee looks like?



It's 2017. It's no secret that neonicotinoids are responsible for declines of wild bees. Nonetheless, chemical companies continue to market these highly toxic insecticides to home gardeners.

They use deceptive advertising and colorful, slick packaging and shelf placement to sell us these poisons.

Now it's time to take the next step and get them out of the hands of unsuspecting home gardeners who are buying these pesticides without knowledge of how to properly apply them. Urban uses have been shown to be a significant source of pesticide pollution in surface waters.

And once these very poisonous and bio-persistent products get into our streams and rivers, they cause die-offs of the many water insects that feed Oregon's endangered salmon and trout species.

What will we all say to future generations who will ask us what caused the extinction of life in Oregon's aquatic systems?

Senate Bill 929, the Oregon Pollinator Protection Act is an essential step to immediately reduce neonic contamination in Oregon's environment. Eugene's state Sen. Floyd Prozanski is the chief bill sponsor. He understands that pollinators are in crisis and that immediate action is required.

Oregon already has rules to keep nearly 500 dangerous pesticides out of the hands of untrained consumers; it makes sense that neonicotinoids, highly toxic and persistent, should be added to this list.

This bill permits judicious neonicotinoid use by professional applicators, farmers or veterinarians who are properly trained and licensed.

Oregon will join most European countries and the state of Maryland that have already taken steps to restrict neonicotinoids.

More than 60 statewide organizations and businesses, as well as dozens of legislators, have signed on to support SB 929. This coalition represents beekeepers, farmers, anglers, waterkeepers, food and beverage distributors, and advocates for wildlife.

Please learn more about how to support the Oregon Pollinator Protection Act. Our landscapes and waterways are at the brink of ecological collapse. We must act now to ensure that our wild bees and beneficial insects remain healthy and alive in Oregon.

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Kathy Ging

11 hours ago

Research mainly in other countries has found microwaves from cell towers that send signals to cell phones, WiFi, Smart TVs+ also harm pollinators & birds. But few mention it. We should not permit 5G networks. One source told me 5G may be a final death knell for bees.