



Boštjan Noč

President, Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, Slovenia

Are We Aware of the Importance of Bees?

In Slovenia, we have a very popular song about a beekeeper written by Lojze Slak that became a folk tune and almost every Slovenian knows the words to it. A rough English translation of the chorus would be:

*How lovely they hum,
How lovely they smell,
They bring back memories
Of when I was young.*

*Little bees, little bees,
You are my friends.
This old beekeeper
Will never forget about you.*

The bee—so small, yet so important. Do we nowadays even realise how important bees are? I am sure that we mostly don't, or at least not fully! Even we, beekeepers, far too often forget what the basic mission of honey bees is. Too many times, we succumb to the pressures of the modern world to exploit everything and more, even bees. Yet, beekeepers are almost the only ones caring for the preservation of honey bees and informing the public about their meaning and endangerment. By doing so, we provide our planet with a special service—a pollination service that is still free in most of the world and that many people don't see and are therefore not even aware of. It should be emphasised that the honey bee is, of course, not the only pollinator and that other pollinators are very important as well (bumble bees, solitary bees, flies, butterflies, birds, bats etc.), but the honey bee is nonetheless the most crucial. Without pollination, there would be virtually no greenery and no blooming, and most of the FOOD would no longer exist.

Those who are aware of the significance of bees know that the queen of animals is the diligent little BEE!

We can already find areas around the world where bees cannot survive due to pollution, excessive use of harmful phytopharmaceuticals, climate change, common monocultures, diseases etc., and pollination is attempted by “exploiting people”—in the sense of cheap workforce ... But could this kind of hand pollination with a brush be the future, our future? Will robotic pollination be possible in the future?

Absolutely not!

Where the conditions do not allow bees and other pollinators to survive, something is seriously wrong with the environment and people need to start realising this, and now. Hand pollination is a very short-term solution. If bees can't survive in that kind of environment, in the long run, humans won't be able to either. Let's ask ourselves if an environment where bees can't survive because of unreasonable human actions is healthy and appropriate for our children, grandchildren, mothers, fathers and grandparents.

In my opinion, the idea that if bees die, people will die soon after is completely justified. I can explain this in the following way: if an environment is not suitable for bees, it won't be long before it's not suitable for other living beings on this planet either. Indeed, humans are the most adaptable among them, but if no living beings are left on the planet, humans will disappear as well.

The basic mission of bees is therefore pollination and nothing else but pollination. Bee products are negligible in comparison to pollination. Approximately a third of the world's food and almost two thirds of fruit depend on honey bees, not to mention the importance of pollination for preserving everything that is green and blossoms on our planet. The value of pollination for food production is measured in billions of euros or dollars. The value of pollination of what is green and flowers is much higher and actually impossible to estimate.

Fortunately, there are still enough honey bees in most parts of the world (in many areas especially thanks to beekeepers). It is, unfortunately, human nature not to appreciate everything that is offered to us. For many people, bees are something completely normal in the environment, something that we have and will always have.

But is this true? ABSOLUTELY NOT! It is high time to take action.

Today, bees are very endangered all over the world. An especially interesting fact is that they are mostly endangered because of the reckless actions of people themselves. At the same time, bees can almost no longer survive without the help of people. It's a crazy world where people try to repair what they have ruined. Rescue whatever they can, at least.

The purpose of WORLD BEE DAY is to make us think about the importance of bees and other pollinators at least once a year and look inside ourselves in order to stop destroying bees and other pollinators, and thus the entire chain of life on Earth, with our reckless actions. World Bee Day must become a movement for keeping our planet green and blooming, and a planet where everybody has access to food! No bees, no food! We need to provide bees with an environment where they can survive and carry out their basic mission—pollination.

World Bee Day is therefore not only a project of raising awareness about the importance of bees and other pollinators, but also a project of preserving our planet. Bees are a real indicator of environment cleanliness; they are the first to feel the changes in the environment, which is why we have to consider them as true natural “environmentalists”. It is time we lend them our ear, especially the

decision makers and those who run the world ...

I believe we all agree that every person in this world deserves to have food every day. We have to produce more of it every day, and every day more of it depends on pollinators and, first and foremost, honey bees. Talking about reducing world hunger without ensuring the conditions for the existence of bees and other pollinators would be sticking our head in the sand. That is why 20 May won't be only a World Day for bees, but also a worldwide movement for a green planet and for ensuring people have food all around the globe.

Last but not least, bee products and beekeeping are synonyms for a healthy diet and lifestyle in general. Bees are often called "winged pharmacists", and numerous bee products are a real gift of nature. Life without bee products has been unimaginable throughout the history of humankind. If we just think about the meaning of beeswax and candles that represent the light of life ... In short, yes, bee products are very important as well, but not even nearly as much as pollination.

Therefore, all of us, especially the people responsible and competent, have to listen to bees, so that the world finally realises that our planet should not be taken for granted and that we need to start taking care of it like we would of a small child. We need to start turning words into deeds, stop climate change provoked by humans, reduce the use of various harmful phytopharmaceuticals, invest more in the development of environmentally friendly products for pest control and for fighting diseases attacking bees ... Let's observe bees and follow them, they will guide us towards a clean and healthy environment, appropriate for bees and people. After all, this is something we ALL want!

From now on, 20 May will be a worldwide celebration dedicated to bees and beekeepers and I am convinced that the declaration of World Bee Day will make the world think about bees in a wider sense, especially in the context of the significance of ensuring the conditions that will enable bees, and consequently people, to survive. So, too, will 20 May remind us of the need to preserve our green planet and clean environment and especially of the importance of reducing world hunger.

We could even say that 20 May, World Bee Day, is a day about ensuring pollination service, a clean environment and a green planet and thus ensuring food production!

Beekeeping is a special mission; beekeepers are advocates of a healthy lifestyle and concern for a clean environment. From time to time, beekeepers also deserve a THANK YOU. THANK YOU for engaging in this noble activity.

Let this song play in everybody's ears:

"Little bees, little bees, you are my friends."

Photo: Drago Kuralt, Slovenia





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Photos: Slovenian Tourist Board

