



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, March 3, 2024

Bears and Bees - Two of Many Vulnerable Species

“Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.” Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 33

“Scientists have found that **“some polar bears face starvation as the Arctic sea ice melts because they are unable to adapt their diets to living on land.”** The iconic Arctic species normally feed on ringed seals that they catch on ice floes offshore. But as the ice disappears in a warming world, many bears are spending greater amounts of time on shore, eating bird's eggs, berries, and grass. However, the animals rapidly lose weight on land, increasing the risk of death....

There are about 26,000 polar bears left in the world, with the majority in Canada. Populations are also found in the US, Russia, Greenland, and Norway. Polar bears are listed as vulnerable to extinction by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with climate change a key factor in their decline.” (Matt McGrath, Environment correspondent, BBC, 2/13/24)

Have you noticed in recent years that you don't see as many bumblebees as you used to? “American bumblebees once buzzed across the country. **Today, it's estimated that the population has dropped by 90%.** In eight states, the bee has disappeared.... Multiple threats have contributed to the decline of the American bumblebee. Climate change, habitat loss, and proliferation of toxic pesticides are among the leading causes of mass die-offs.” (*Environmental Action*, 1/16/24)

Pesticides have made huge swaths of land across America poisonous for pollinators. “Each year, 150 million acres of soybeans, wheat, corn fields and more are planted with seeds coated in toxic neonicotinoid pesticides -- and they're just as deadly for birds as they are for bees...

Dipping seeds in toxic pesticides is the most common way that neonicotinoids (neonics) are used. And if a hungry bird happens upon some neonic-coated seeds, it can die after eating just one tiny seed. And as the seed grows, the plant becomes infused with toxic pesticides and can poison the bees that flit from plant to plant. The roots, the soil, the stem, the leaves, and the flowers all pose a toxic threat to bees.... **Already, a quarter of America's 50 bumblebee species are at risk of extinction....**” (*Environment America*, 2/5/24)

“Listing the bee as endangered will require the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to create a recovery plan -- helping to create safe havens for these bumblebees and give them the monitoring and protection they need to begin to thrive again” (*Environmental Action*, 1/16/24). [Add your name: The American bumblebee needs Endangered Species Act protections.](#)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.