

Congressional Briefing on Impacts of Pesticides on Birds, Bees, and Broader Ecosystems

From bees to birds: assessing the impacts of the nation's most widely-used insecticides



Tuesday, March 19th, 2013
Senate EPW Committee Room
406 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC



SPEAKERS

- ☞ Dr. Pierre Mineau, Toxicologist
- ☞ Scott Hoffman Black, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, IUCN Butterfly Specialist Group
- ☞ Steve Ellis, Commercial Beekeeper, Old Mill Honey Company (California and Minnesota)
- ☞ Peter Jenkins, Attorney, Consultant at Center for Food Safety
- ☞ Cynthia Palmer (moderator), American Bird Conservancy

DR. PIERRE MINEAU: BEYOND THE BEES: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF NEONICOTINOID INSECTICIDES ON BIRDS

Dr. Mineau will discuss the new American Bird Conservancy scientific report on neonicotinoid insecticides' effects on birds and aquatic ecosystems. He will address how, in their rush to replace other dangerous pesticides, regulators have approved more and more neonicotinoid products for an ever-growing number of uses without regard to the red flags surrounding this persistent, cumulative, irreversibly-acting new class of pesticides.

Dr. Pierre Mineau began his long and distinguished scientific career studying the effects of persistent organochlorine compounds, including DDT and PCBs, on fish-eating birds. He then became responsible for the Canadian assessment of new and existing pesticides to determine their adverse impacts on wildlife. In 1994, he transitioned from regulatory reviews to full-time research on the environmental impacts of pesticides, achieving the rank of Senior Research Scientist at Environment Canada. Working with international collaborators and graduate students, he studies the global environmental footprint of pesticides. He also researches how birds are exposed to pesticides and how bird populations respond to pesticide use and agricultural practices. His work includes defining the ecological values of birds in cropland as well as estimating the incidental take of birds from various other human activities. He has written more than 100 peer-reviewed publications and has authored some 200 presentations. He officially retired from public service in 2012 and now holds an Emeritus position with the Canadian government, serves as an adjunct research professor at Carleton University in Ottawa and at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and consults privately.

SCOTT HOFFMAN BLACK: ARE NEONICOTINOIDS KILLING BEES? THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE CLAIMS

There is mounting evidence that the widespread use of three particular neonicotinoid insecticides—clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam—are harming bees. Scott Black will discuss the research related to the impact of these products on pollinating insects such as honey bees and native bees and will provide recommendations for how to protect these vital animals.

Scott Hoffman Black is an ecologist and entomologist. He is the Executive Director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and also serves as the Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature

(IUCN) Butterfly Specialist Group. Scott has authored over 100 scientific and popular publications, co-authored two books and contributed chapters to several others, and written dozens of reports on land management issues. His work has been featured in newspapers, magazines, and books as well as on radio and television. Scott has received several awards, including the 2011 Colorado State University College of Agricultural Sciences Honor Alumnus Award and the National Forest Service Wings Across the Americas 2012 Butterfly Conservation Award.

STEVE ELLIS: THE BEEKEEPER PERSPECTIVE ON NEONICOTINOIDS AND THE CURRENT POLLINATION CRISIS

Beekeepers across the nation have suffered extensive kills, both acute and chronic, to their honey bees resulting from exposure to neonicotinoids. They are also experiencing poor colony health, poor honey production, and severe financial and personal stress. Steve Ellis will speak to those losses and describe how EPA has failed to respond to them. He will discuss how neonicotinoids weaken honey bees, making them more susceptible to pathogens, viruses and parasites. Steve also will discuss the current pollination crisis in California's vast almond groves, where honey bees are dying in unprecedented numbers.

Steve Ellis owns and operates Old Mill Honey Company of Barrett, Minnesota, a migratory beekeeping operation with about 2,300 hives of bees during the honey-producing season. The hives in his business produce honey for market over the summer months in Minnesota and do paid pollination services in the winter and spring in California. He has over 35 years of experience and has served as an officer in major national beekeeper organizations for many years. He has suffered direct losses to his bees and his business from the use of the neonicotinoids that EPA approved and he has formally, but unsuccessfully, requested the agency to suspend their use.

PETER T. JENKINS: HOW DID EPA GET US TO THIS POINT AND WHAT ARE POLICY OPTIONS FOR CONGRESS?

The environmental problems described in this briefing did not happen by accident. They resulted from regulatory decisions by EPA's pesticide branch to allow more than 100 neonicotinoid products to be used on dozens of different crops across the nation. Peter T. Jenkins will give an overview of EPA's questionable decisions and will describe a Petition he filed in 2012 on behalf of beekeepers and others to suspend the use of clothianidin. Congress can play a major role going forward. Peter will suggest policy options that can improve the situation for pollinators, birds, and ecosystems at risk.

Peter T. Jenkins is an independent attorney consulting for the Center for Food Safety (CFS) on pesticide impacts. For the last year, he has worked for CFS on reversing the regulatory failures that have contributed to the current environmental impacts caused by neonicotinoids. Peter has more than 25 years of experience as an advocate, litigator, policy analyst, and consultant in a broad range of environmental and consumer law. He has worked for several major non-profit groups in Washington, DC, and formerly worked for the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, Food and Renewable Resources Program. He is a Member of the DC Bar Association. In addition to a JD from the University of Puget Sound Law School, he has a Masters in Environmental Studies from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

CYNTHIA PALMER (MODERATOR)

Cynthia Palmer has worked in the environmental arena in the U.S. and internationally—in the executive and legislative branches of government, in non-profit organizations, and in the news media. She has co-authored a report on pest control for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, advocated for safer alternatives with the World Wildlife Fund, and helped place pesticide issues in the national spotlight as senior editor of the daily news service, Environmental Health News. Her other work has dealt with chemical contamination, agriculture and food safety issues, worker health and safety, air and water pollution, and climate and energy policy. Cynthia received her AB, JD, and MPH from Harvard concentrating in environmental and occupational health.