



WORLD AGRICULTURE SUFFERS FROM LOSS OF WILD BEES: STUDY

February 28, 2013 France24.com reported: "Falling numbers of wild bees and other pollinating insects are hurting global agriculture, a study released on Thursday found. Managed populations of pollinators are less effective at fertilizing plants than wild ones, the researchers said, so the dearth of pollinating insects cannot be solved by simply introducing others.

"Adding more honey bees often does not fix this problem, but... increased service by wild insects would help," said Lawrence Harder, a scientist with the University of Calgary in Canada, which led the study.

Pollinating insects usually live in natural or semi-natural habitats, such as the edges of forests, hedgerows or grasslands. These habitats are gradually being lost as the land is cultivated for agriculture, but, as a result, the abundance and diversity of wild pollinators crucial for the crops' success is declining. The researchers analyzed 41 crop systems around the world, including fruits, seeds, nuts, and coffee to examine the impact of wild pollinators on crop pollination.

"Paradoxically, most common approaches to increase agricultural efficiency, such as cultivation of all available land and the use of pesticides, reduce the abundance and variety of wild insects that could increase production of these crops," says Harder. He said tomatoes, coffee and watermelon are among the key crops which are likely to suffer from the declining population of wild pollinators.

Most flowering crops need to receive pollen before making seeds and fruits, a process that is enhanced by insects -- like bees, but also flies, butterflies and beetles -- that visit flowers.

The research, which was published in the journal *Science*, was carried out by an international team of some 50 researchers, who collected data from 600 fields in 20 countries."..."



BENEDICT BECOMES 1ST POPE IN 600 YEARS TO RESIGN

February 28, 2013 MyWay.com reported: "Benedict XVI became the first pope in 600 years to resign Thursday, ending an eight-year pontificate shaped by struggles to move the church past sex abuse scandals and to reawaken Christianity in an indifferent world.

As bells tolled, the Swiss Guards standing at attention in Castel Gandolfo shut the doors of the palazzo shortly after 8 p.m. Thursday (2 p.m. EST), symbolically closing out a papacy whose legacy will be most marked by the way it ended - a resignation instead of a death."...

Benedict leaves behind a church in crisis, still coping with the fallout of the sex abuse scandals, a central Vatican administration torn by divisions, and what Benedict said was a crisis of faith, with baptized Catholics in places of ancient Christian tradition thinking they can do without God."..."

NETANYAHU URGES 'MILITARY SANCTIONS' THREAT AGAINST IRAN

February 27, 2013 The Jerusalem Post reported: "As the major powers' talks with Iran ended in Kazakhstan Wednesday with only a promise to meet again in March and April, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said the world must make clear to Tehran that there will be 'military sanctions' if it does not halt its nuclear program.

Netanyahu's comments came at a Jerusalem meeting with visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister G.L. Peiris.

'Iran continues to defy the international community, and it does not appear that it is trying to halt its military nuclear program,' he said. 'Like North Korea, it continues to oppose all international standards.'

As a result, Netanyahu said, 'I believe that the international community needs to increase the sanctions and make clear that if Iran continues with its program, there will be military sanctions. I think there are other ways to make Iran listen to the demands of the international community.'..."

NORTH KOREA SAYS NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAN REACH U.S.

February 27, 2013 SpaceDaily.com reported: "North Korea warned Wednesday that the US mainland was 'well within' the range of its nuclear weapons, as Pyongyang continued to ramp up the bellicose rhetoric after its recent nuclear test. In an article posted on the official Uriminzokkiri website, a member of the Korean National Peace Committee -- a propaganda body -- said the North was now a 'fully-independent rocket and nuclear weapons state'.

'The United States should be acutely aware that the US mainland is now well within the range of our strategic rockets and nuclear weapons,' the signed commentary said. North Korea made a similar claim in October last year, saying it possessed rockets capable of striking the continental United States.

That was largely dismissed as bluster, but that was before Pyongyang conducted a successful long-range rocket launch in December,

followed by its third nuclear test on February 12.

Although most experts believe the North has a long way to go to developing a dependable inter-continental ballistic missile, the December launch was a strong step in the right direction. And this month's nuclear test also fuelled concerns that North Korea is refining the technical ability to place a miniaturised nuclear warhead on a long-range missile..."

TUBERCULOSIS - AN OLD PLAGUE COMES BACK STRONGER

February 25, 2013 The EU Observer reported: "Over the course of two weeks in 2011, Stefan Radut lost seven kilos in weight. He coughed constantly. He was chronically tired and had difficulty sleeping. His girlfriend finally persuaded him to go to a doctor. There he discovered he had tuberculosis (TB) - an illness he thought belonged to the history books.



"I didn't know anything about this disease. I thought it was eradicated," says Stefan. But there was a still grimmer surprise to come. Stefan, a 24-year old university graduate from Romania, did not just have a normal version of the bacterial lung disease. He had a drug-resistant strain. The first line of antibiotics did not work.

Instead he had to be hospitalised for several months and take a cocktail of drugs which are less effective and which have distressing side effects. Stefan's initial reaction to tuberculosis is common. But the Great White Plague - normally associated with 19th century workhouses - was never fully beaten.

And now several eastern European countries are fighting an epic battle against a tuberculosis that has mutated into a more deadly form. That they succeed in this battle is of direct relevance to all Europeans. And in some countries, success is not guaranteed."..."

THAI MUSLIM INSURGENTS LAUNCH ATTACKS

February 25, 2013 SpaceWar.com reported: "Muslim insurgents in Thailand's troubled southern Muslim provinces launched a series of similarly timed reprisal attacks. The 29 assaults included bombings and arson after a failed militant attack by about 50 fighters wearing combat uniforms assaulted a Thai marine corps base in Narathiwat's Bacho district. The near-simultaneous attacks occurred between 7:30 p.m. and midnight Saturday in six Pattani districts. Seven local self-defense volunteers were injured in a bomb blast but local officers said the situation was under control by 2 a.m. Sunday.

A security source told the Bangkok Post that Muslim militants led by Masore Dueramaethe were believed to have carried out the attacks. Dueramaethe's group is also blamed for multiple bombings and arson attacks Feb. 16 in Pattani's provincial center."..."

NORTH KOREA THREATENS US WITH 'MISERABLE DESTRUCTION'

February 25, 2013 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: North Korea on Saturday threatened the United States with "miserable destruction" if the Pentagon goes ahead with its annual, routine military exercises with South Korea next month.

"You had better bear in mind that those igniting a war are destined to meet a miserable destruction," said Pak Rim Su, chief of North Korea's military delegation to the Demilitarized Zone between the two countries. He called the drills "reckless," accusing the United States and South Korea of preparing to invade the north.

The regularly scheduled joint drills come amid heightened tensions, as North Korea last week confirmed that it had conducted its most powerful nuclear test to date, in a striking act of defiance that drew condemnations from around the globe.

The nuclear test follows previous detonations by the North in 2006 and 2009. The latest bomb tested had greater explosive force and utilized a smaller, lighter device, the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported last week.

U.S. President Barack Obama has vowed to pursue further sanctions against North Korea following the tests."..."



BRITAIN'S CARDINAL KEITH O'BRIEN TO SKIP PAPAL ELECTION

February 25, 2013 USAToday.com reported: "The United Kingdom's top cardinal, Keith O'Brien, is to step down as an archbishop, effective immediately, according to a statement published on the website of the Scottish Catholic news office.

Cardinal O'Brien, who is the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and the U.K.'s most senior Roman Catholic, also says he is choosing not to take part in the election of the next pope next month to succeed Pope Benedict XVI, a process known as the "conclave."...

His resignation came after news reports Monday of unspecified inappropriate behavior toward priests in the 1980s. He contests the allegations and pointed out in a statement that his request to resign was submitted to Benedict months ago. He said he would not attend the conclave because, "I do not wish media attention in Rome to be focused on me."

"Approaching the age of seventy-five and at times in indifferent health, I tendered my resignation as Archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh to Pope Benedict XVI some months ago."..."

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