



A Pesticide to Prohibit

By Emily Pfister

Recently, scientific research has shown us that the class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids are harmful to life and must be removed from the market.

In December, the Environmental Protection Agency [released an assessment](#) which found that these pesticides can “kill and harm birds of all sizes...(and)...pose significant danger to aquatic invertebrates”. The EPA assessment found that if seeds treated with neonicotinoids make up as little as 1%-6% of a bird’s diet, “serious harms could result”.

In other research, the Center for Biological Diversity published a [report](#) last year on the severity of the problem of bee decline in the United States. The study examined 1,400 bee species in America and found that 700 were declining and 350 were severely in danger of extinction. The [United Nations](#) in 2015 found that 9% of world butterfly species were also in peril.

This research adds to a growing body of evidence showing that pollinators are in decline and that neonicotinoids are, in part, to blame along with other pesticides, habitat loss, and climate change.

The European Union has placed a temporary ban on three neonicotinoids and the [Daily Mail reports](#) that a new assessment by the European Food Safety Authority has confirmed that “most uses of the chemicals pose a risk to the insects”. Environmental Secretary Michael Grove has said that a total ban in the countryside “would be supported by the UK and remain in place after Brexit”. Canada has also recently [proposed tighter restrictions](#) on two neonicotinoids - clothianidin and thiamethoxam.

At the same time, America is headed in the wrong direction: the US Environmental Protection Agency is [considering a proposal](#) to spray thiamethoxam on 165 million acres of wheat, barley, corn, sorghum, alfalfa, rice and potato.

It is clear that the Sierra Club needs to take action to stop the use of neonicotinoids. Recently, Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-)R) and several other members of Congress introduced the Saving America’s Pollinators Act. This Act would require the Environmental Protection Agency to do its job and ban the use of neonicotinoids until a comprehensive analysis can be done.

The bill is HR 5015: Sierra Club members are encouraged to [find out if your Representative is a co-sponsor](#). It’s essential that our Representatives know how much we care about preserving our pollinators. However, since this bill does not have a significant chance of passing, we must also take to the streets. We must organize creative actions to get the attention of our government; this includes starting petitions and getting neighbors and family members to write letters to Congress.

Additionally, we must boycott products that use neonicotinoids: [check out this list](#) to identify products you may use that are harmful to the environment.

This year it would be wonderful if the Sierra Club could go to the [March Against Monsanto](#) and make sure the event addresses the harm that chemical companies are inflicting on our ecosystems.

This content originally appeared in the March 2018 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. Opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Mount Vernon Group or the Sierra Club. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/.