Bee crisis? How intelligent sticky drones could buzz alongside nature's pollinators

Tiny drones dressed in horsehair and coated with a sticky goo have been attempting to pollinate lilies in a Japanese lab. The $100 quadcopters [measure] just 42mm-wide [1.65 inches] and [weigh] 14.8g [0.52 ounces]…

"I believe that a form of AI, GPS and high-resolution cameras would be very useful for the development of automatic machines in the future. In particular, AI will help provide the intelligence in a robotic drone. They will [autonomously consider] something such as exploring the shortest path and the highest efficiency for pollination. That must be helpful and useful for farmers, right?" [said Eijiro Miyako, a chemist from the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) Nanomaterials Research Institute (NMRI).]

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A 2016 study looking at 18 years of data on bee populations in England found that insecticides were linked to a longterm decline in the pollinators. Another paper out the same year identified 57 pesticides licensed for use in the European Union that are poisonous to honeybees. Meanwhile, an estimated $235 billion to $577 billion worth of global crops depend on pollinators, a report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) revealed in 2016.

Miyako believes the project could help counter this enormous problem, by automating manual crop pollination. "We hope the robotic pollinators might replace bees [to counter] the problem of honeybee decline – but more importantly, we should use both together. They might cause good synergistic effects."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Robo-bees covered in sticky horsehair could one day help pollinate crops