

Video: Good intentions aren't enough — Attempts to protect wild bees has gone awry and an influx of imported honeybees are doing more harm than good to native populations

Ron Miksha, a bee ecologist and former commercial beekeeper, is doing research at the University of Calgary about competition between native bees and honeybees. He's found that too many honeybees can have a negative effect on native bees.

"The concentration is typically in the range of eight or 10 honeybee colonies per square kilometre," said Miksha, "and in parts of our city, we are close to that number right now."

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During the spring and fall, native bee species have to compete with honeybees — which aren't native to North America — to pollinate flowers. In the summer, honeybees tend to pollinate flowers that are not native to North America, increasing the number of flowers in the city that don't really belong here. Miksha said honeybees can also spread diseases to other species.

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"It's a lot like getting chickens in order to save the birds," said Miksha. "We don't put up a chicken coop thinking we're going to save the sparrows. We don't put up a [honeybee] hive thinking that we're going to save the bumblebees."

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