

Editorial

Special issue on bee conservation

The conservation of bees has never been of such pressing concern. As human populations continue to grow we rely increasingly on the key pollination service provided by bees. At the same time, dramatic declines in both wild and managed bees are increasingly being documented. The recent large-scale losses of honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) in the USA (winter 2006/07) to colony collapse disorder (CCD) have only served to highlight our reliance on bees, both managed and wild, for the pollination service they provide. That the 20 000 or so currently recognised species of bee play a pivotal role in ecosystem function and agricultural production as key pollinators of both wild plants and crops is well appreciated by readers of *Apidologie*. Since publication of the landmark book *The Forgotten Pollinators*¹, national, regional and international campaigns have been established to highlight the plight of bees and to mainstream pollinator conservation into policy and practice. This has produced a diversity of research and outputs, and more significantly highlighted our lack of understanding of the factors and processes that are behind well-documented declines in honey bees, bumble bees and solitary bees world wide. In assembling this special edition of *Apidologie* devoted to Bee Conservation, we have asked some of the world's leading experts to bring together current knowledge on the current status of bees and their conservation, and on factors determining bee abundance and biodiversity, across broad geographic horizons and across a wide taxonomic breadth, with the aim of identifying major trends and knowledge gaps. We hope this special edition will be a useful resource, as a state of bee conservation today and as a manifesto of future work needed to ensure the long-term survival of bees and of the essential service of pollination that they provide.

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January 2009

¹ Buchmann S.L., Nabhan G.P. (1996) *The Forgotten Pollinators*, Island Press.