

NEWS

National and world news in brief

By Patrick Webster

Honeybees dying off across the U.S. Waves of violence rock Baghdad

WASHINGTON: Commercial beekeepers have reported alarming news regarding the nation's honey industry and related businesses: the mysterious death of millions of honeybees en masse.

Several organizations met with the House Agricultural Subcommittee in Washington to discuss the impact the problem could have on the U.S. economy. Over the last six months, many beekeepers have had between 50 to 90 percent of their total bee populations die off for reasons yet to be determined.

A coalition of beekeepers, scientists and government officials have thus far been unable to determine a cause or solution for the problem, calling it CCD, or Colony Collapse Disorder. The current prevailing theory is that several factors including pesticides, parasites, pathogens and production stress have affected the bees' ability to adapt and survive.

"We believe that some form of stress may be suppressing immune systems of bees, ultimately contributing to CCD," said Agricultural Research Service spokesman Caird Rexroad.

Government officials contend that the decline in bee population, which has been happening at an increased rate since 1989, combined with CCD could pose some

very serious problems for the economy and agricultural production. Domestic honey prices have increased over 14 percent in the last year, and in 2005 the U.S. honey industry was forced to import foreign bees for the first time just to keep production steady. The sudden drop in domestic stock due to CCD could have far greater implications.

The loss of the domestic bee colonies would also have a severe impact on the production of local agricultural and flower crops. Many food and cash crops, especially fruit, depend almost entirely on the bee population to handle the pollination that makes production possible. Now that planting season has begun in many parts of the country, farmers are concerned that bee levels have dropped below that necessary for efficient production, which could drive up prices for all food products.

"Though economists differ in calculating the exact dollar value of honeybee pollination, virtually all estimates range in the billions of dollars," said entomologist Dr. May Berenbaum at the House committee hearing on Thursday.

In the last 20 years, the U.S. bee population has dropped an estimated 40 percent.

BAGHDAD, Iraq: Several suicide bombings, gun battles and mysterious shootings plagued the Baghdad area Thursday as security forces struggled to bring it under control.

At least two suicide bombers with high explosives strapped to their chests waded into markets crowded by people looking to pick up food and other goods before the weekend began, detonating themselves and killing at least 115 innocent bystanders. Over 170 others were seriously injured, and there is some confusion in the Iraqi government as to how many bombers were involved.

"It was a very, very crowded market. All those killed are innocent," a wounded but otherwise unidentified man told a Reuters new reporter in Baghdad.

A few miles north of Baghdad in the town of Khalis and about 20 miles

south of Baghdad in the city of Mahmoudiya, at least three car bombs were involved other incidents at roughly the same in a similarly crowded marketplace, with similar results.

Baghdad police swept through the capital city to discourage further violence, only to find at least 25 bodies riddled with bullet holes and no immediate signs of motive.

As this was taking place, the new U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, was being sworn in Thursday.

"We have a historic challenge ahead of us," Crocker said in a news conference after the ceremony. "Terrorists, insurgents and militias continue to threaten security in Baghdad and around the country. Security is without question the central issue."



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

Staying healthy as the seasons change Niagara fire wakes

By Sheri Kroskie
staff writer

For most college students, spring signals the start of baseball season, the start of flip-flop wearing season, and the start of gorge-hiking season. For an unfortunate few, spring also means the start of college sickness season. Director of Behrend's Health and Wellness Center, Patty Pasky McMahon, said that fall and spring are the peak seasons for viral infections, such as mononucleosis and influenza. While it has not been scientifically proven that the warm weather is directly related to the increase of flu or mono cases, Pasky McMahon said she believes there is a connection. According to Pasky McMahon, who is a nurse practitioner, protecting yourself from illness is simple. "The hardest thing for people to do is usually the easiest," Pasky McMahon said. "Nutrition, rest and exercise are the keys to good health."

Studies showed that the flu has been one of the most devastating infections in human history. In 1918 and 1919, the flu killed 50 million people worldwide in just a few months. Fortunately, flu seasons this dangerous are rare. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, five to 20 percent of Americans get the flu each year. That is 15 to 60 million people in the United States alone.

Approximately 200,000 are hospitalized because of flu complications, and 36,000 die. Many of these deaths could be prevented if people got

their flu vaccine in the fall each year.

College campuses like Behrend are particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of flu and other illnesses. College students contract six to seven colds a year, a rate much higher than a typical adult, according to the University of Iowa's Student Health Services website. The stress of classes, poor exercise and eating habits and lack of sleep also lead to health problems. Plus, dormitories, gyms, libraries, and classrooms are breeding grounds for germs.

The flu is caused by a virus, mostly attacking the lungs but also affects other parts of the body. The three types of influenza virus that are identified today: Influenza C, Influenza B, which causes sporadic outbreaks of the flu, especially in communal settings like college dorms, Influenza A, is responsible for the classic outbreaks every winter like clockwork.

Mononucleosis is another big illness that plagues college campuses. Health officials say mono is probably the worst as it usually knocks you out for long periods at a time.

Since germs spread so easily through coughing, sneezing, and even breathing, Pasky McMahon said that good hygiene is critical. "If you make sure you wash your hands, keep your hands off of your face and cover your mouth when you cough, you lessen your chance of spreading an infection or picking one up," Pasky McMahon said. "Rest, rest, rest! A virus that wouldn't have bothered you a month ago could now affect you if you haven't gotten enough rest." She stated, Pasky

McMahon also explained that your body needs an average of eight hours of sleep every night. "Some people require even more sleep," Pasky McMahon said. "For some people, more than eight hours of sleep a night is a luxury." Doctors say when a person is at rest, their body produces more antibodies that help fight off infections. To try to remain healthy this season, eat well, exercise and get adequate rest.



As the promise of spring comes to Erie, students are spending more time outside. They should also take the necessary precautions to avoid getting sick.

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Police and Safety Services Manager Jim Amann said that they currently do not have any suspects. "We are talking to residents and trying to see if anyone has information to share," Amann said, "If anyone knows anything, they certainly shouldn't protect that person. They might be looking at it as a prank, but they were risking lives."

Police and Safety Services are not looking at the fire as a prank. According to Amann, the culprit faces arson, risking a catastrophe, and reckless endangerment charges. "He is facing felony charges," Amann said. "That building houses hundreds of sleeping people, if that fire would've gotten out of control, there possibly could have been serious injuries or a death," Amann said.

According to Cerroni, if the police do not solve the case, the residents of the second floor will be charged for the damages to the walls, carpet, and floor.

"It's not unusual to hear about injuries or deaths from residence hall fires," Amann said. According to the National Fire Protection Association, there were 1,380 fires at universities. Officials from the United States Fire Administration said that 80% of all fire related deaths occur in residence halls.

Students assist with TOPS
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to because of baseball...I thought it would be a great chance to get involved," said Campbell.

Another volunteer, Mackenzie Light, has formed a special relationship with her child, an autistic child also named Mackenzie. This is Light's third year in the program and has worked with the same girl each year. "We were able to form a relationship throughout the eight week program and continue to keep in touch today," said Light. "Volunteering with the TOPS program has been an amazing experience for me and the children who participate in this program. I am very thankful that I can take part in it and have such an impact on the children's lives."

More information on TOPS can be found at www.usyouth-soccer.org, or contact Coach Perritano at dpp2@psu.edu.

Lisa Ling brings international continued from page 1 Task force works continued from page 1

allowing me to cover the current international issues that I wanted to. I was and still am committed to telling international stories so the American public can be more informed about the world. I truly believe that if Americans are given the opportunity to care, they will."

Ling also took the opportunity to give her opinion on the media in the United States saying she wishes international issues were covered more often. "It seems that the American public cares more about Anna Nicole Smith than they do about what is going on around the world. But I think since the media continues to cover it, they are by default forced to care. It is a travesty that national news stations don't cover these types of issues and that the American public is kept in the dark. If the media covered them, then maybe by default Americans would care about them too," explained Ling.

At this point in the evening, the crowd was completely transfixed by Ling's speech and video presentation, and many were ignited to ask questions, which she answered with a personable honesty. Many asked about her time on The View, some wanted to know how she had the strength to go into such dangerous situations, and others were completely content being in her presence. Senior Communication major Jenna Gregory said, "I have been watching her for years. All through high school I followed her on Channel One, and for her to come here is just incredible. She just has such a presence. She is amazingly interesting but it's her presence that is so capti-

vating. Her passion just emanates."

Like Gregory, many Behrend students were very impressed with the comfortable and real persona that Ling spoke with. Passion for excellence can certainly be learned through Ling, and many students took notice. "She is such an inspiration and just has such obvious passion. I would love to follow in her path some day," said Gregory.

In addition to her numerous international reports on National Geographic Explorer, Ling is also currently a regular contributor to the Oprah Winfrey Show, where she focuses mainly on international affairs dealing with women and children like gang rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, bride burning in India, and child trafficking in Ghana. However, Ling said the piece she is most proud of is her investigative piece of China's Lost Girls, which shows the results of China's one child law. "I am so glad that I was given the opportunity to work with Oprah and deal with issues of women and children, because if women don't stand up for each other, who else is going to?" said Ling.

Ling hopes to continue working on both the Oprah Winfrey Show and National Geographic Explorer, where she will undoubtedly reveal many more secrets of current international issues. To learn more about the speaker series contact the Penn State Behrend Office of Student Activities or phone 814-898-6171.

local environmentalists for its interesting trees. Senior Associate Dean, Dr. Robert Light said, "The faculty and staff have further developed the Arboretum at Penn State Behrend which works with the ground crew to make the campus a place recognized for its education, research, and outreach related to its trees and plantings." In addition, Light said, "The faculty and staff have established a Landscape Committee that works with the grounds crew to beautify specific sites on campus."

The task force has also been successful in incorporating the use of geothermal heating in residence halls and reclaiming heat from the Junker Center pool area to use in other parts of the building. In addition, automatic heating and cooling setbacks are being utilized when buildings are not in use, and automatic light shutoff has been installed in classrooms and parking lots when they are not in use. Among other promising efforts to reduce energy use, Light said, "They are working with housing to promote the installation of "low-flow" showerheads in residence halls, and working with housekeeping to maintain the college's active recycling program."

Educating the Behrend community about sustainability is a vital asset to create a more knowledgeable and environmentally friendly campus. "We need the faculty, staff, and students to realize how important becoming sustainable is, not only on campus, but in general. The entire community must drive sustainability efforts and not wait or rely on a few to push the program," Light said.

The Greener Behrend Task Force is integrating sustainability topics into the curricular offerings throughout the college as part of their education campaign. The community can become more involved in creating a more sustainable environment by "Learning more about sustainable issues and working with college leaders to promote environmentally friendly ideas," Light said. With future plans for the task force, Behrend will continue to stand as a role model for other institutions by promoting a greener environment.