

Adapting to change...

Plant pollinators are in sad decline throughout the world because of environmental degradation. Without the birds and the bees, beetles and bugs that would normally spread their pollen, how will flowering plants cope?

A very small ray of hope has been shown by a researcher at the University of Kansas. Sarah Bodbyl-Roels has shown in one species, monkey flowers (*Mimulus guttatus*), there is very rapid evolution that helps them survive by self-pollinating.

She planted 1600 of these flowers in a field and the same number in a greenhouse away from its natural pollinator, the bumble bee. By the fifth generation there were shown to be genetic variations in the greenhouse plants which had developed smaller flowers, allowing self-pollination as the female and male organs are much closer together.

Seed production in these plants crashed in early generations before returning almost to normal.

This certainly gives a small hope that there can be adaptation in some plants to environmental destruction, but the world would be a much less colourful place without the bees and birds and butterflies!