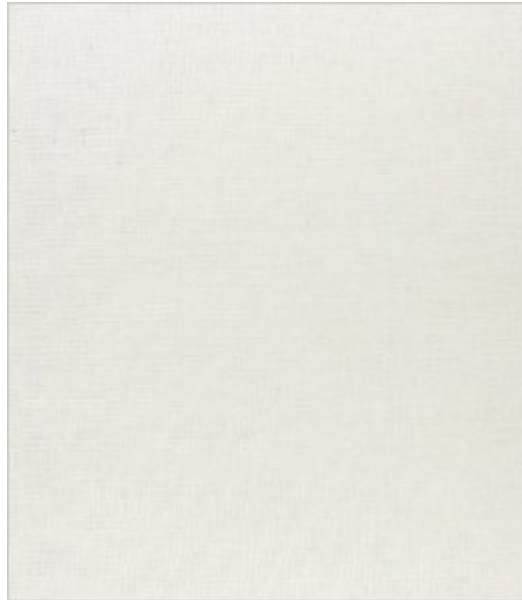


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The Wisdom Of The Hive: The Social Physiology Of Honey Bee Colonies



Synopsis

This book is about the inner workings of one of nature's most complex animal societies: the honey bee colony. It describes and illustrates the results of more than fifteen years of elegant experimental studies conducted by the author. In his investigations, Thomas Seeley has sought the answer to the question of how a colony of bees is organized to gather its resources. The results of his research--including studies of the shaking signal, tremble dance, and waggle dance, and other, more subtle means by which information is exchanged among bees--offer the clearest, most detailed picture available of how a highly integrated animal society works. By showing how several thousand bees function together as an integrated whole to collect the nectar, pollen, and water that sustain the life of the hive, Seeley sheds light on one of the central puzzles of biology: how units at one level of organization can work together to form a higher-level entity. In explaining why a hive is organized the way it is, Seeley draws on the literature of molecular biology, cell biology, animal and human sociology, economics, and operations research. He compares the honey bee colony to other functionally organized groups: multicellular organisms, colonies of marine invertebrates, and human societies. All highly cooperative groups share basic problems: of allocating their members among tasks so that more urgent needs are met before less urgent ones, and of coordinating individual actions into a coherent whole. By comparing such systems in different species, Seeley argues, we can deepen our understanding of the mechanisms that make close cooperation a reality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Seeley has written an amazing book that will work for many different types of readers at many levels. The book outlines experiments that Seeley did with prepared hives to demonstrate the system dynamics of how a hive adapts to the resources around it. Seeley's style is easy for a layperson to read with clear charts and pictures. This is a great book to savor; read a chapter, then daydream about how these creatures could be constructed to perform their functions. I got a lot out of the book. First of all, it's a narrative of Seeley's experimental method; he labels a hive (puts the bees in a hive in a refrigerator, pulls them out one by one and puts identifying tags on each), sets up feeding stations with different concentrations of sugar at different distances, then observes behavior to demonstrate how individual variation in bees optimizes the hive's collection of resources. Second, it's a pretty good introduction to bee physiology and the hive's social system. Seeley describes experiments tracking the individual jobs of bees as they age and, in doing so, he covers how and what the bees do. Third, Seeley reviews and describes the previous literature, giving a history of behavioral study of bees. Finally, he develops his thesis regarding the hive as a system, with parallels to systems theory and studies of hierarchies of organization. This is a fun read; easy to get through, thought provoking, giving you appreciation for the author's work and for the creatures that are his subject.

This is a special scientific book, for the author tells the reader not only **WHAT** we know about the inner workings of honey bee colonies, but also **HOW** we know it. Through simple but graceful writing, accompanied by many diagrams, Seeley takes you on a step-by-step journey through his experimental analysis of how the members of a bee colony work together to gather the nectar, pollen, and water that they need. I think anyone interested in seeing how a human has dissected the complex internal organization of a bee hive will find this a rewarding read. I especially liked chapter 6, where Seeley explains that the bees have several kinds of communication dances, not just the famous waggle dance, to activate more bees for making honey.

While I'd hate to do without most of my 50 plus books on bees and beekeeping, this book would be **THE** one I'd keep if I could have just one. Comprehensive information that is both fascinating and useful, clearly and even beautifully expressed. More books should retain the context of honey bee colony as social (super) organism.

I was excited to find an eBook available for this important work and purchased immediately. I found out when reading that there are no images. When the text refers to a diagram, there is no diagram

and the ebook tells you to refer to the printed version. That does not work for me since I do not have the printed version. The images and diagrams are a very important part of this book and the decision to leave them out seems to have been poorly considered. If I had the printed book at my disposal then I would not need or want the kindle version. It would surprise me a lot if anyone who owns this already pricey book would be interested in the almost equally expensive yet seriously flawed electronic version. I still want the book and will order the printed work eventually. I was given a full refund so there is no problem there.

This is a wonderful explanation of the scientific method practiced by a thoughtful and eloquent writer. For those interested in the life of a bee colony, there is much to be learned. Even for those only remotely interested in bees, Mr. Seeley opens eyes about the way we have come to explore questions and seek answers to advance our understanding of the natural world. For some reason, Harvard University Press has set a very high price on this facsimile edition that comes without a book jacket and has blurry reproductions of the few photos that are included.

Very interesting and *The Social Physiology of Honey Bee Colonies* this is good studies of the Bees just got the first couple of chapters read will be a great book for the Winter time reading and waiting to get back outside !

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