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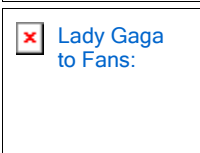
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Jan. 24, 2008

# What's Wrong With The Bees?

## Steve Kroft Reports On The Mysterious Disappearance Of Bees



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Over the past year, some beekeepers have lost up to 90 percent of their hives. The losses could have serious effects because honeybees help produce a third of the foods we eat. Steve Kroft reports.



Beekeeper Dave Hackenberg (CBS)

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(CBS)

*This segment was originally broadcast on Oct. 28, 2007. It was updated on Feb. 21, 2008.*

If you want to grow fruits, vegetables or nuts in the United States on a

commercial basis you have to have soil, sun, seeds, water, and honeybees -- millions and millions of honeybees brought in from all over the country to pollinate the crops. As **correspondent Steve Kroft** explains, honeybees are the unsung heroes of the food chain, crucial to the production of one third of the foods we eat. So when billions of bees began to mysteriously disappear last year, there was plenty of concern and no shortage of theories, blaming everything from cell phones to divine rapture. None of the usual explanations seemed to fit. Some of the nation's top scientists are trying to understand this phenomenon, but no one is more immersed in the mystery than the man who is widely credited with discovering it.

Lewisburg, Pa., has a population of 6,000 people and 88 million bees -- enough to sting every

resident of New York, California, and Texas combined. The bees belong to David Hackenberg and his family, who have been keeping them for almost half a century.

"It's the most unique thing in nature there is. I mean you stick your head inside that beehive, and it's, you know, it's something about bees that just makes the rest of the world just seem to go away," Hackenberg says.

Hackenberg says he gets along with his bees "fine."

The bees make plenty of honey, but most of the money comes from loading 2,200 hives onto flatbed trucks and renting them to farmers all over the country. On the day we followed them, their services were desperately needed in Maine, where mile upon mile of wild blueberries were in bloom just waiting to be pollinated.

Thirty years ago, a good-sized blueberry farm was 500 acres; today, a large commercial operation can run to 10,000 acres and there are simply not enough honeybees in Maine to do the work. On average, Hackenberg and his bees log 60,000 miles a year on the road, wintering in Florida to work citrus and cantaloupe, then heading back north in the Spring for apples and cherries, maybe even to California for the almond crop. He's just a small part of an industry that pollinates 90 different crops worth an estimated \$15 billion. And most people don't even know it exists.

"What happens when you pull into a gas station with a big flatbed of bees?" Kroft asks. "Are people nervous? People get scared?"

"Oh yeah, I mean, you get all of them things. I mean, you know, 'There's bees in that truck!' Most of the people in this country have no idea what it takes to put the food on their table," Hackenberg explains.

Hackenberg thinks bees are underappreciated. "Sometimes I think beekeepers are underappreciated," he adds, laughing.

The hours are long and the work strenuous. After a ten-hour drive to Maine, Hackenberg and his crew still had to unload the hives and position them in the fields. Even when he grabbed a few hours sleep in the cab of his truck, he wasn't alone: most people would have trouble getting to sleep with a couple of dozen bees buzzing around, but Hackenberg never worries about getting stung.

"That's just part of the business, you know. It's like stopping for traffic lights in New York," he

says.

He estimates he has been stung "thousands and thousands" of times. "I've had days where I might have had a hundred, 120 bee stings in one day," he tells Kroft.

Hackenberg says the body builds up immunity to the stings, while the uninitiated might end up in the hospital.

## Continued

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Produced By Andy Court and Keith Sharman

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

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