



To Bee or Not to Bee

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Bees are all around us. And while some might consider them no more than a nuisance, the role that bees play in nature simply cannot be overstated - they pollinate many of the food crops that we depend on. A world without bees would be unrecognizable since they also pollinate many of the plants and trees in our gardens, forests and meadows.

When the news broke three and a half years ago that honeybee populations around the globe were declining at an alarming rate, it was no surprise that scientists took notice. What was happening to the bees, and could they be saved?

These are but two of the questions *To Bee or Not To Bee* explores, taking us headlong into a world of nature, science and big business.

Our story begins in 2006, when Pennsylvania beekeeper David Hackenberg went public when over half of his honeybee hives died from a mysterious disease. That disease soon had a name - Colony Collapse Disorder, and it rapidly led to record colony losses for beekeepers across the United States. At the same time, in other parts of the world, domesticated honeybees and wild bee populations were sickening and dying as well. A number of factors seemed to be triggering those die-offs. The search for a single cause and its cure has become more and more desperate over time.

As the problem becomes more severe, scientists and beekeepers in Europe and North America work tirelessly to find the cause of these deadly declines: is it genetic, a virus or pollution, or some combination of them? Today beekeepers are hanging on by a thread, food supplies are threatened, and the biodiversity of the planet itself has been endangered.



Could bees be an early warning sign of a larger problem with our ecology? Are they the canary in the coal mine for the health of Planet Earth?

Like many scientific mysteries, the answers are rarely found in one place. *To Bee or Not To Bee* takes viewers to France, Germany, Canada and the U.S.A., and into laboratories, bee yards, landfills, almond orchards and breeding grounds, all in search of clues.

The picture that emerges is at once hopeful and disturbing. The stresses bees face today are numerous - from the use of chemical pesticides, to viruses, to the loss of natural bee habitats. Although, these enterprising insects are resilient and adaptable, will they be able to change fast enough? Will science find solutions to the problems they face?

To Bee or Not to Bee is directed by Mark Johnston and produced by Natalie Dubois and Christine Le Goff, for Galafilm Productions.

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