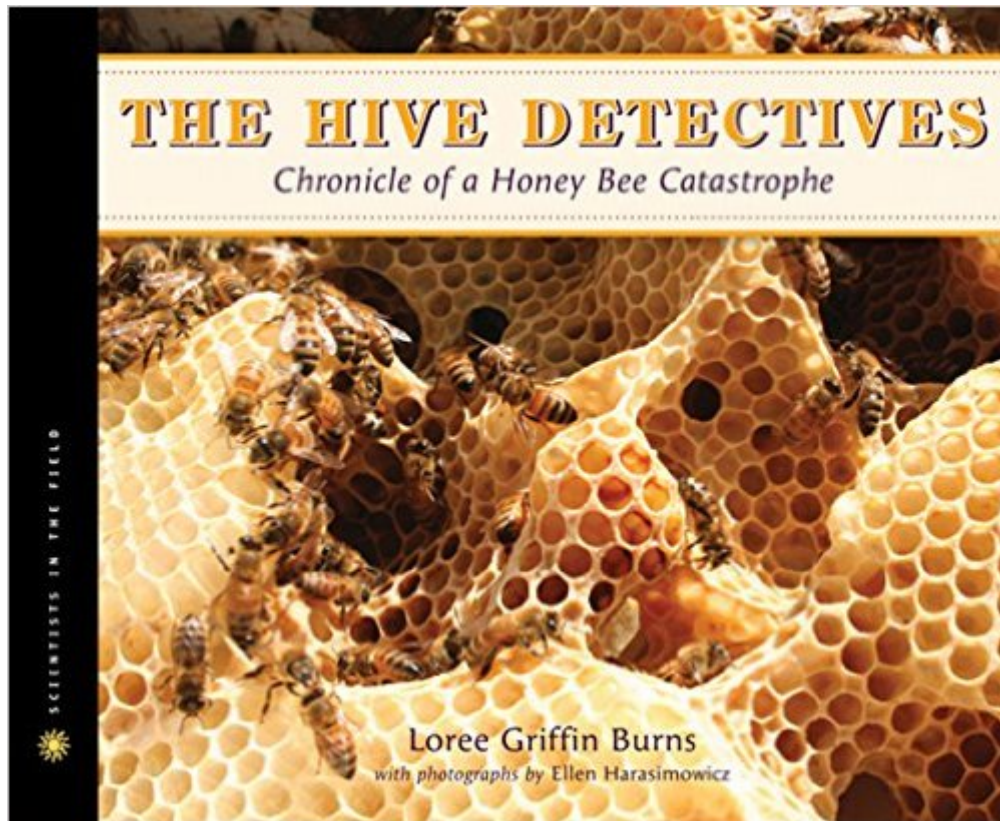


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# The Hive Detectives: Chronicle Of A Honey Bee Catastrophe (Scientists In The Field Series)



## Synopsis

Without honey bees the world would be a different place. There would be no honey, no beeswax for candles, and, worst of all, barely a fruit, nut, or vegetable to eat. So imagine beekeeper Dave Hackenburg's horror when he discovered twenty million of his charges had vanished. Those missing bees became the first casualties of a mysterious scourge that continues to plague honey bee populations today. In *The Hive Detectives*, Loree Griffin Burns profiles bee wranglers and bee scientists who have been working to understand colony collapse disorder, or CCD. In this dramatic and enlightening story, readers explore the lives of the fuzzy, buzzy insects and learn what might happen to us if they were gone.

## Book Information

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Series: Scientists in the Field Series

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (14 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

non-fiction can be as good as fiction with the right writer. this book hits the target head on. Quote from my son: "why can't schoolbooks lay out history in a fun way? this book is so fun to read and my social studies book in school is so boring!"

I myself purchased this book to share with my Grandchildren....being that it is a children's science

book!! I found it insightful, well written, easy to understand, the photos were awesome!! I think anyone that is interested in science books for their kids or for a little science lesson for themselves (we all know some of us could use it) and some splendid photography should get this book and read it and pass it on to the youngsters, great learning tool for schools also !!!! Totally worth the money I spent!!!!

"Wind, rain, spiders, and other animals can pollinate plants, but nothing does the job as efficiently as the honey bee. Some crops, such as almonds, are so dependent on honey bees that they couldn't be produced without the help of commercial beekeepers. Every February, more than half a million acres of almond trees bloom in California, and beekeepers from around the country truck in more than one million bee colonies to do the pollinating." Other crops depend on commercial honey bees too. In addition to California almond trees in February, Dave's bees pollinate Florida citrus trees in March, Pennsylvania apple trees in April and May, Maine blueberry bushes in June, and Pennsylvania pumpkin plants in July. "The biggest thing about bees is not honey," says Dave. "It's that your food supply depends on them." When I was little and I had a nose stuffed with snot and a throat filled with sandpaper, my mom would squeeze some fresh lemon into a big mug, add a spoonful of honey and fill it with hot water. I'm thinking that honey's sweet role in being a comfort to me when I was feeling really miserable is one reason why I am still so fond of it today. Concerned about the degree to which refined sweeteners were being added to nearly all processed foods (Yes, I read a book about it.), I've avoided eating food and beverages containing white sugar and/or corn syrup since the Seventies. But I do like to keep a container of honey around for when I bake. As Loree Griffin Burns explains in *THE HIVE DETECTIVES*, big-time commercial beekeeper Dave Hackenberg trucks all of his bees to Florida in the winter. "Instead of clustering in a hibernation-like state, which is how bees survive frigid northern winters," each of the 150 million bees living amongst Dave's 3,000 beehives keep busy as...err...bees, "maintaining their hive, rearing young, and collecting nectar and pollen" (as well as availing themselves of the sugar syrup and protein patties with which they are supplemented in the leaner months). "Dipping into the flower zone Soaking up directions Finding our ways in the dark..." -- Naomi Shihab Nye from "Honeybee" But as became big news in 2006, twenty million of Dave's buzzing pollinators vanished without a trace that winter. And, as Loree Griffin Burns was explaining to me when we conversed at the NCTE convention last fall, she recognized news of the bee problems as a potential ecological and food supply disaster in the making, and decided she needed to take a closer look at what was being discovered in the scientific community about these mysterious disappearances. Since that conversation, I have been waiting

impatiently all winter for a chance to read and view what Loree learned from researchers about this Colony Collapse Disorder. What conditions did the hive detectives discover? "Among this 'stuff' were striking changes in the way the bees' internal organs looked under the microscope. Dennis found swollen, discolored, and scarred tissues and organs throughout the bodies of bees from CCD hives. The CCD bees also contained evidence of yeast, bacteria, and fungal infections, often all in the same bee. These abnormalities weren't seen in bees from healthy hives." What is causing these abnormalities? As the hive detectives compared evidence from hives that suffered CCD to evidence from healthy hives, the results remained unclear as to what factors are separately or collectively responsible for this Colony Collapse Disorder. The pests that many in the beekeeping community immediately suspected of triggering the CCD are apparently not the problem. Nor, it seems, are viruses. There was also no significant difference between the levels of pesticide residue found in the pollen and wax samples from the hives that had been victims of CCD versus the healthy hives. The investigation continues. But what stuns me in reading *THE HIVE DETECTIVES* is that across the board -- in healthy hives and in dead hives -- high levels of pesticides are being found in pollen and wax samples. These pesticides include those employed by the beekeepers themselves to rid bees of certain mites and all the latest pesticides employed by the farmers who are growing the crops being pollinated by the bees: "The first surprise was how common chemicals were; Maryann found them in almost every sample she tested, whether it came from a CCD hive or a healthy hive. Of 208 pollen samples, only three were completely chemical-free." "It was shocking to us to find, on average, five pesticides in each pollen sample," said Marann. "In one sample we found seventeen different pesticides." Perhaps even more shocking was that the chemicals found most frequently -- and at the highest levels -- were those that beekeepers themselves put in the hive to protect their bees from Varroa mites. Somehow these beekeeper-applied chemicals were finding their way into the pollen the bees stored in the hive. "So, does this mean that I am ingesting a chemical feast every time I put together a batch of carob fudge brownies or oatmeal raisin cookies containing honey? Whether or not the honey comes to contain concentrated levels of these pesticides is a question that Loree does not directly address in the book, but is the question that has me thinking hard about my continued use of honey. My biggest fear from reading this book is that Rachel Carson is long forgotten, that our silent spring is coming, and that 2006 was just a dress rehearsal for an even larger CCD disaster that will critically and irreversibly impact the human food supply. I continue to not understand why those of us who seek to eat in a manner that puts less pressure on an ecologically stressed-out planet are so often characterized as being radical, while the employment by multinational food production companies of new pesticides as foundational tools in their

monocultural excesses -- a process by which the public and Mother Earth have become the laboratory rats on whom these brave new chemicals are being tested -- is perceived to be the honest work of mainstream down-to-earth American farmers. Ellen Harasimowicz's photographs are vivid and revealing; and Loree Griffin Burns' text is clear, engrossing, and easy to follow. Given the ease to which the next epidemic of Colony Collapse Disorder might so quickly plunge us all into the midst of a planetary food supply catastrophe, *THE HIVE DETECTIVES* is certainly the most important children's book I have so far read this year.

*The Hive Detectives: Chronicle of a Honey Bee Catastrophe* is an informative nonfiction book that focuses on the honey bee. The plot focuses on a true event in 2006 when a honey bee farmer in the U.S. finds that his honey bees have died. We're not talking about a few hundred bees or even a few thousand...we're talking about twenty million honey bees. This was huge loss and word of mouth discovered other farmers all over the world had experienced similar losses. This information made its way to the United States Congress which thankfully warranted enough concern to take action. The term colony collapse disorder (CCD) was coined and a group of scientists were recruited to determine what was killing honey bees. *The Hive Detectives* discusses the science behind the honey bee as an animal, the dynamics within a honey bee hive, the purpose the honey bee serves in earth's ecosystem, how the honey bee's work impacts humans, and the theories/research/testing that were conducted by scientists during the CCD investigation. It also offers beautiful visuals on every page, a helpful glossary, and a list of other materials to study. Although this book is targeted to middle-grade youth, I as an adult learned quite a bit. What hit me the hardest was a renewed realization that sustainability in agricultural farming NEEDS to be common practice ASAP. If not, we will be exterminating not only the targeted species of pests that are harmful to farming but also the irreplaceable species that make farming possible. In other words, we will no longer be able to grow fresh plant-based foods which will have a domino effect that could very well exterminate human life. No, this book does not lay out the horror I just summed up - that was just what I took away from my reading experience. Unfortunately, *The Hive Detectives* does not offer a single conclusion, but it details a combination of factors that may be in play. If nothing else, it will get children and adults eager enough for a conclusion to go research this topic on their own. This is an example of when knowledge is power. Change needs to happen and the more people that know about it the better. My favorite quote: "Our world is a dangerous place for them [honey bees], and it will take a Herculean effort on the part of all humans - people who keep bees, people who study bees, and even people who read about bees - to see them through."

I knew a bit about bees and the current predicament before I read this beautiful and informative book, but my appreciation has grown so much. After reading about bee habits and bodies and needs, my gardening has changed. I look at the bees as friends. I watch them closely. And feel so so glad that they're around. I hope this book will be read by many, who will also come to be more thankful for the bees in our lives, and help make the world a safer place for them.

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