

'The Incomparable Honeybee & the Economics of Pollination'

Dr. Reese Halter • Rocky Mountains Book

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You read his column "Back to Nature" each week in the Santa Monica Daily Press. He is the voice for ecology. You see the book advertised in our paper and you may be asking what it is about. It is about a very interesting and important inhabitant of planet Earth — our honey bee.

Bees are basic to our ecology. Dr. Reese Halter presents to us an essay detailing the history and the benefits of bees. He narrows it down to one group within the bee family, that of the honeybee. He does mention the other bees in the family yet centers on the common honeybee for his thesis. They have been with us for over 110 million years and as the chief pollinators they must remain.

Ecology is a big thing in these times. Our stewardship of the environment is one of the most basic responsibilities we have. Unless we get active in doing something about it our whole lifestyle will be compromised. Even in the small area of insect husbandry it is important.

Halter brings our attention to the bee. For most of us a bee means danger of being stung. Yet our bee, Halter points out, gives so much stability to the environment that we need to take another look. With our rush to spray chemicals on crops to protect them from pests, we are decreasing the areas the bee can get pollen from. This decreases the bee population and decreases our population as an end result.

Halter has a whole chapter on the bee dance and how it uses it to communicate. This is interesting; to think that someone would spend time observing bees to

record this.

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Bees also have a large part to play in our food production. All our fruits are dependent on proper cross pollination and bees are a step in that circle.

"There are over 330 million mouths to feed in Canada and the United States alone. The honeybees are directly responsible for pollinating over \$44-billion worth of food and commodities each year in both countries, including melons, gourds, pears, peaches, kiwis, macadamias, sunflowers, canola, avocados, lettuce, broccoli and cotton," Halter records.

Even ice cream lovers and coffee lovers are included as bees are needed to pollinate the ingredients used in those specialties.

All is not gloomy, though, as Dr. Halter suggests some things we should be able to do to reverse the problems surrounding bees. Some suggestions in this booklet are that we can change some of our agriculture systems to cooperate with our ecosystems. More compost piles can be developed. These are just a few ways we can maintain the web of life.

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