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PRESS RELEASE

A superorganism in trouble

New book on honeybees with spectacular color photographs provides a new perspective on hive life

Honeybees pollinate our crops and produce the honey we enjoy. We all know that. What we are perhaps not aware of, however, is just how or why they do this and why we are so dependent on what they do.

In a time of global warming and catastrophic failure of bee colonies around the world, the new book **The Buzz about Bees** by Juergen Tautz is a timely call for an appreciation of the intricacy of the sociophysiological and behavioral mechanisms, as well as the internal checks and balances, which must remain intact for bee colonies to function properly.

Over 200 remarkable action photographs, all in color, present the entire range of astounding bee activities. Tautz describes in an entertaining and easily understandable way the complex interactions that take place between individual bees in every bee colony, allowing it to work as a whole. He reveals bee colonies to us as “superorganisms” whose almost eerie collective intelligence and behavior emerges from the thousands of small decisions made by the individual workers, not one of which has any notion of the “big picture”.

Should any part of the system break down, the colony will, instead of reproducing itself by swarming, die. This integrated view of bee colonies is often not understood, especially by those who treat bee colonies like poor migrant workers, transporting them to climates to which they have not adapted, and keeping them under cramped conditions in which disease spreads rapidly. Is it any wonder that colonies die?

Juergen Tautz is a professor and head of the BEE group at the University of Wuerzburg Biozentrum in Germany. A significant amount of the material in this book has been drawn from the research of his own group which has two major goals: basic research on the biology of honeybees and the communication of knowledge about bees to the broadest possible audience. Tautz’s articles and popular lectures in Europe have been singled out by the European Molecular Biology Organization, recognizing him as one of the best science communicators in Europe.

The author is available for interview.

Juergen Tautz

The Buzz about Bees

Biology of a Superorganism

2008. Approx. 300 p. with 230 color illus.

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The Buzz about Bees

Biology of a Superorganism

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