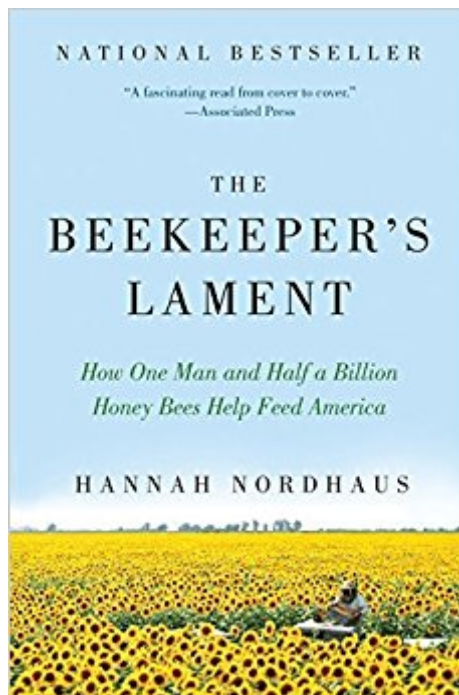




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# The Beekeeper's Lament: How One Man And Half A Billion Honey Bees Help Feed America



## Synopsis

“You’ll never think of bees, their keepers, or the fruits (and nuts) of their labor the same way again.” • Trevor Corson, author of *The Secret Life of Lobsters*

Award-winning journalist Hannah Nordhaus tells the remarkable story of John Miller, one of America’s foremost migratory beekeepers, and the myriad and mysterious epidemics threatening American honeybee populations. In luminous, razor-sharp prose, Nordhaus explores the vital role that honeybees play in American agribusiness, the maintenance of our food chain, and the very future of the nation. With an intimate focus and incisive reporting, in a book perfect for fans of Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation*, Michael Pollan’s *The Botany of Desire*, and John McPhee’s *Oranges*, Nordhaus’s stunning exposé illuminates one of the most critical issues facing the world today, offering insight, information, and, ultimately, hope.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A fascinating read from cover to cover.” (Associated Press)

“Bees are amazing. That’s the first reason to read *The Beekeeper’s Lament*, journalist Hannah Nordhaus’s rewarding account of migratory beekeeping and the mysterious scourge stalking the domestic bee population. It’s metaphorical and poetic, elegiac and somehow sad.” (Christian Science Monitor)

“The *Beekeeper’s Lament* is at once science lesson, sociological study, and breezy read. A book about bees could easily descend into academe, but the author settles for nothing less than literature.” (Boston Globe)

“Nordhaus, an award-winning journalist, weaves a dramatic tale of how and why

beehives and bees themselves are threatened by everything from mites to moths to bee thieves. (Washington Post) "The book is a rich mix of head and heart. (Minneapolis Star Tribune) "Echoing Rachel Carson's 1962 attack on the effects of pesticides, *Silent Spring*, Nordhaus explores this fascinating subject, providing long overdue recognition to the beekeeper and their task as stewards of a species. (Financial Times) "A fascinating peek into the precarious business of keeping the nation's crops pollinated. (Smithsonian) "Some of the best narrative and storytelling I've had the pleasure of reading since Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*...You must read this book. (Maggie Koerth-Baker, Boing Boing) "A remarkable book. Nordhaus uses a somber, lyrical writing style to make bees into just about the most fascinating subject you've ever encountered while at the same time crafting an elegiac metaphor for the contingency of modern American life. (The Millions) "A graceful, informative, and engaging book. (Hill Rag) "Her book is extraordinary in its breadth and depth, and most of all, it is exquisitely written. The *Beekeeper's Lament* offers us a fascinating peek into the diverse, interrelated, and worrisome aspects of the beekeeper's world....Enjoyable and enlightening. (AlterNet) "A crackerjack story the author struck gold. Nordhaus is a lively writer who ably conveys the economics of the trade and is just as able to describe the romance and miracle of honey. A smooth-as-honey tour d'horizon of the raggedy world of beekeeping. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) "In this revelatory, bittersweet investigation into the state of commercial beekeeping in the 21st century, Nordhaus follows the migratory life of a commercial beekeeper, John Miller, as he trucks his bees between California and North Dakota...and, against all odds, keep[s] his bees and his business alive. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) "Miller is a complex and colorful man, and his story, along with the story of the bees, is an engaging read. (Booklist) "Highly recommended as both a character study and a compelling popular science work for interested readers. (Library Journal) "This book is a terrific read. (American Bee Journal) "I loved *The Beekeeper's Lament*. With great reporting and great writing, Hannah Nordhaus gives a new angle on an ever-evolving topic. You'll learn a lot. (Bernd Heinrich, author of *Winter World* and *Mind of the Raven*) "Hannah Nordhaus has written an engaging account of the men and insects who put food on our tables. *The Beekeeper's Lament* is a sweet, sad story. (Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*) "Rollicking, buzzing, and touching meditation on mortality....You'll never think of bees, their keepers, or

the fruits (and nuts) of their labors the same way again. (Trevor Corson, author of *The Secret Life of Lobsters* and *The Story of Sushi*)

The honey bee is a willing conscript, a working wonder, an unseen and crucial link in America's agricultural industry. But never before has its survival been so unclear and the future of our food supply so acutely challenged. Enter beekeeper John Miller, who trucks his hives around the country, bringing millions of bees to farmers otherwise bereft of natural pollinators. Even as the mysterious and deadly epidemic known as Colony Collapse Disorder devastates bee populations across the globe, Miller forges ahead with the determination and wry humor of a true homespun hero. *The Beekeeper's Lament* tells his story and that of his bees, making for a complex, moving, and unforgettable portrait of man in the new natural world.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Very informative but also personal and entertaining. It's amazing how little people know about honeybees compared to what they think they know. Anytime the subject comes up I bring up many of the facts I learned in this book and people are very surprised - interested in learning more. I recommend this book to all of them. Thanks to John Miller for spending so much time with the author - I was rooting for him along the way.

This book is fantastic. If you're thinking of dabbling in beekeeping as a hobby, this is a must-read. Also, if you're slightly geeky you'll really enjoy it. The author does a great job of explaining the history of beekeeping and focuses on one beekeeper in particular. She also delves into the plight of the honeybee with background on genetics, disease, pesticides and the many facets of beekeeping. I was really interested in the genetics component as that is my background - she does a great job of explaining the science of it without being too technical for the average person. The book is often funny and sad - overall, a great read!

I really enjoyed reading this book. The author does a great job looking at both the micro and macro effects of the beekeeping industry and she also provides background to how the colony works. Among other things, the author spends some time discussing all the calamities the bees face and how in the recent past the bees have been put against so many different environmental catastrophes and that bees need beekeepers as much as we need them. The author transitions effectively from one topic to another. This topic, so effectively covered in this book, is so vital to our agriculture and the author writes in such layman terms that this book can be read by any beginner

and those just taking an interest in how bees influence our every day lives.

First, this book is NOT just for those who are "into" bees, although after you read it, you WILL be! Here's a question: How much honey does a bee produce in her lifetime, which is about six weeks? (You'll have to wait until the end of the review to find out.) The writing style is engaging and informative without being dry and John Miller, who is the wax that holds the story together, will make you appreciate, if not love, the whole idea of honey and honeybees. Did you know that hives don't just sit in one place all the time, but get shipped all over the country to pollinate all those things you love? I heard the author, Hannah Nordhaus, on NPR and bought the book based on that and it has been a delightful experience, you might even say "the bee's knees"! Seriously, I really think you'll love it and want everyone else to read it, so I hope you'll give it a try. And if you guessed that a honeybee produces a pint or even a cup of honey in her lifetime---sorry. Her life's work adds up to 1/12th of a teaspoon!

Learned so much! This is an intimate portrayal of the beekeeper's life and dedication to a dying occupation. Unraveling the story of the honeybees demise and the beekeeper's attempts to continue in their work against all odds is told poignantly.

This book is at once a fascinating history of bees and bee keeping and the bee pollination industry in the United States and an alarming chronicle of the collapsing bee industry and populations of bees. It is very well written from the perspective of a researcher working with and following one of the preeminent bee operations in the country. It is disturbing when you consider how much industrialized food production has come to depend on bee operations and now that bees are dying left and right and dramatically, this has very great potential impacts on how we live - even if we have never personally seen a bee in our lives. Well worth reading, and very well written. I highly recommend this book.

Hannah Nordhaus is an excellent writer. She has managed to turn 266 pages about bees and beekeepers into an un-put-downable, exciting look at our country, our foods, our way of life - and the wonderful world of bees. She introduces us to the feet on the ground, John Miller and his fellow beekeepers, who make a system of pollinate and move on quickly work - so we can find what we want at our local market. This is a book I would recommend to everyone who eats.

Well written description of the life of a beekeeper and their problems. I probably won't be raising any bees (wife has enough problems with our current insect populations), but this should be read by anyone that would like first to know where their honey comes from and why other food products that depend on bees may be in trouble.

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