

Bees Besieged

by Bill Mares

One Beekeeper's Bittersweet Journey To Understanding

Bees Besieged, by Bill Mares, explores the troubled world of honey bees, beekeeping, and beekeepers as no book has done before. It sheds light on this tiny, but so very important aspect of American Agriculture. Bees Besieged looks at the problems of today, analyzes this esoteric industry and offers hope where, lately, hope has been in short supply.

Kim Flottum, Editor, *Bee Culture* magazine.

Bill Mares is a hobby beekeeper living in Vermont. Several years ago he lost all of his bees...they died in the spring from a tiny, exotic, and poorly understood pest that is still not under control. Bill decided then to find out what he could about his bees, this deadly, destructive pest, his beekeeping hobby, but most of all the bigger industry he was a part of.

He began a journey that took him from his home in Vermont to California; from Florida to the Pacific Northwest; from the Midwest plains to the blueberry barrens of Maine. He talked to University scientists who studied bees and to those who studied their pests; he talked to commercial beekeepers that, like Gypsies, move their bees from one crop to another to make their living. And he talked to those who stay at home to make honey for a living. He talked to hobby and sideline beekeepers, honey packers and importers, to government regulators and scientists, and everyone and anyone he thought might help him understand what was happening to the whole world of honey bees and to his bees in particular. What he found was an agricultural legacy under siege, an ageless tradition disintegrating around him. And though he found little solace, he did find understanding, and perhaps some hope.

In his quest to understand why all of his bees died, Bill visited scores of people associated in one way or another with this small, quirky industry. And what he found was that to solve this Industry's woes, you must also understand the problems they have with pesticides; foreign honey and international trade; politics and personalities; zoning and government regulations; killer bees and killer bee diseases; cowboy beekeepers who defy the authorities; droughts, floods, frigid winters, blistering summer heat and Mother Nature in general; and mostly, you have to understand the fundamental economics of agriculture in the U.S. They have all contributed to the growing threat. They are all part of the storm.

This spring honey bees and that tiny, exotic pest made the news again, this time threatening the entire production of the most important pollinated crop and the most valuable food California grows and exports...Almonds. During the spring of 2005 thousands of beekeepers lost their bees, threatening not only California's almonds, but fruit, vegetable, and nut crops all across the nation. This year Bill's losses were magnified a million times, and everywhere there was concern.

But the answers Bill found shed light on these problems, and offer hope for a future for honey bees and beekeeping. Moreover, *Bees Besieged* tackles these obstacles, fleshes them out and renders them clear and understandable. But beekeeping is still in a dangerous, though more visible place, and vigilance is still needed. But because of Bill's journey, at the very least these problems are now not nearly as much of a threat.

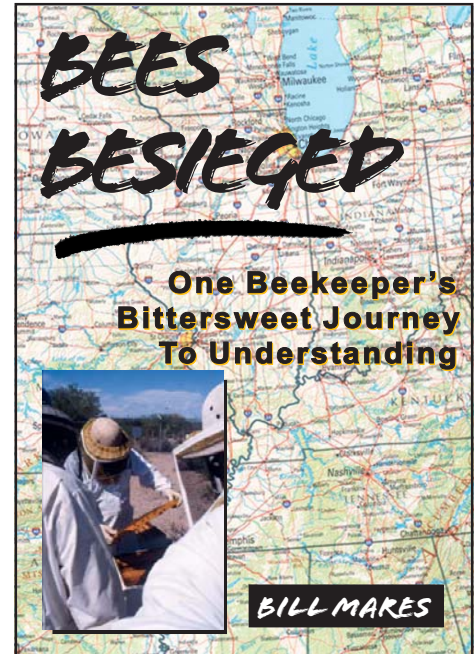
"...a well written narrative that gives an accurate picture of what American Beekeeping is today."

Sue Hubbell, Author, *Beekeeper*.

"...torrentially informative, fun and fascinating."

Edward Hoagland, Author, *Environmentalist*

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