Colony Collapse Disorder: Four Videos and a Book

A biology or entomology teacher can present the currently unsolved problem of CCD to students to generate student questioning and critical thinking. There are four DVDs and one book available as resources. 1) The earliest video is the 55 minute “Nature: Silence of the Bees” produced by WGBH in 2007; it has the fewest errors but lacks the beekeeper’s passion and storyline. Its strength is footage of farmers in south Sichuan Province in China pollinating orchards by hand! 2) “Colony: The Endangered World of Bees” is 83 minutes long. Produced by the Irish Film Board in 2009, it provides a few words from the pesticide companies’ perspective. Is greatly hampered by basing its storyline on a religious family who squabble about finances not directly related to CCD. 3) “Vanishing of the Bees” by Hive Mentality Films was released in 2010. It is 87 minutes long but a teacher will need to trim the content on Earth-as-mother non-science. This video provides an excellent profile of beekeepers David Hackenberg and David Mendes, central figures in the discovery of CCD. 4) “The Strange Disappearance of the Bees” was released in 2011 under Icarus Films but is no longer commercially listed. This has the best footage of the Varroa mites and more testimony from scientists, including May Berenbaum, Paul Ehrlich and scientists who first compiled the honeybee genome. However it asserts “bees can’t live in the environment industrialized agriculture provides.” It does address the wild bee populations and the role of natural selection in adapting bees to their environment.

“Fruitless Fall: The Collapse of the Honey Bee and the Coming Agricultural Crisis” by Rowan Jacobsen was published by Bloomsbury Press in 2008. This 279 page paperback can serve as a class reading resource. Non-scientist Jacobsen describes the CCD discovery and rounds up the usual suspects, and describes the dead-end research.

All media were produced before the European Union placed a moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids in spring 2003. Unfortunately, both the videos and the book fail to acknowledge that there are 7 billion people growing toward 9 billion. This requires monoculturing and the diversion of ecosystems to feed our food chain: more “green revolution.” To forsake chemical pesticides would cut world food production to half of the levels needed to sustain the current human population and would result in massive famine.

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