

The long history and imperiled future of bees

When my sister and I were young, our father inculcated in us an easy sang-froid toward bee handling. It's served me well. As a schoolgirl, I became the classroom hero more than once when an occasional bee blundered inside and buzzed frantically against a window. I knew how to cup it gently — with my bare hands — and release it outside.

And with the rare stinging exception since then, I've worked harmoniously among bees in my garden through many seasons.

So when I saw a new book come out recently with the title "Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees," how could I resist?

Written by Thor Hanson, a conservation biologist based in the San Juan Islands, this popular history goes back 125 million years to trace the evolution of bees from their predatory waspish roots into the more than 20,000 species of pollen-eating bees that exist today.

Hanson reviews research that investigates the parallels between the rise of bees and flowering plants. He talks with anthropologists who are finding new evidence that human interaction with bees extends back into our prehistory. And he tours around the country to meet with bee scientists, work at

"Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees"
By Thor Hanson
Basic Books
304 pp
\$27

bee research sites and visit projects that are restoring and enhancing bee habitat.

Despite all the scientific research, Hanson writes in an accessible, chatty style. And when he gets back home, he studies bees in his wife's island garden and down at the beach with the help of his young son.

But make no mistake, this is serious business. Modern bees have been bedeviled by a series of setbacks in recent decades: first pesticides, then colony collapse disorder and now climate change.

Even as Hanson was writ-



COURTESY BASIC BOOKS
The cover of Thor Hanson's 'Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees.' At right, the author.

ing this book, the first global assessment of pollinator populations was published as a collaborative effort by more than 80 bee experts worldwide. Their findings



were sobering: "roughly 40 percent of species were considered to be in decline or threatened with extinction."

And some species — including the Franklin's bee in southwestern Oregon — already seem to have disappeared entirely.

To varying degrees,

Hanson notes, bee species are contending with "the four Ps": parasites, poor nutrition, pesticides and pathogens.

And given that anywhere from 33 percent to 90 percent (depending on which study you look at) of food in the human diet is dependent on pollinators, the bees' problem quickly becomes our problem, too.

So Hanson travels from alfalfa farms in eastern Washington to almond groves in California's Central Valley to learn about the practices farmers are adopting to keep their bee populations healthy.

And as one bumblebee specialist emphasizes, there's no excuse for

inaction from any of us at this point. "Common sense suggests that reducing pressure from any of these stressors (the four Ps) will help" — for ordinary citizens, that could mean reducing pesticide use, providing landscapes with more bee nesting habitat and growing more plants that feed pollinators.

"Buzz" provokes thought and promotes action. Let's create a little buzz of our own for this book — and for the bees!

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.



ERIC WIEGARDT
AWS-DF, NWS

VISUAL PLEASURE FOR GENERATIONS

LIVE DEMO AUGUST 18TH • 2PM

FREE FOR EVERYONE TO ATTEND. BRING A LAWNCHAIR!

20% OFF ALL ORIGINAL PAINTINGS

WATERCOLOR PAINTINGS

FINE ART PRINTS • FRAMING

WORKSHOPS

WIEGARDT STUDIO GALLERY

2607 Bay Avenue, Ocean Park, WA • 360.665.5976

www.ericwiegardt.com



The Freedom
MARKET

YOUR #1 PREMIER CANNABIS RETAILER

LARGEST SELECTION
FRIENDLY & KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF
ELITE PRODUCTS

Ilwaco	Cathlamet - NEW!	Kelso	Longview
(8am - 10pm)	(8am - 10 pm)	(8am - 12am)	(8am - 12am)
360-261-7200	360-849-4504	360-636-0420	360-703-3229
133 Howerton Ave	327 WA-4	820A West Side Hwy	971 14th Ave

WARNING: This product has intoxicating effects and may be habit forming. There may be health risks associated with the consumption of this product. For use only by adults 21 and over. Keep out of reach of children. Marijuana can impair concentration, coordination, and judgement. Do not operate a vehicle or machinery under the influence of this drug.

