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“A wonderful book about  
humanity’s greatest friend  
among the insects . . .”

—Edward O. Wilson

# HONEYBEE DEMOCRACY

THOMAS D. SEELEY

## Nature offers a solution to our flawed electoral system

Honeybees make decisions collectively--and democratically. Every year, faced with the life-or-death problem of choosing and traveling to a new home, honeybees stake everything on a process that includes collective fact-finding, vigorous debate, and consensus building. In fact, as world-renowned animal behaviorist Thomas Seeley reveals, these incredible insects have much to teach us when it comes to collective wisdom and effective decision making. A remarkable and richly illustrated account of scientific discovery, *Honeybee Democracy* brings together, for the first time, decades of Seeley's pioneering research to tell the amazing story of house hunting and democratic debate among the honeybees.

In the late spring and early summer, as a bee colony becomes overcrowded, a third of the hive stays behind and rears a new queen, while a swarm of thousands departs with the old queen to produce a daughter colony. Seeley describes how these bees evaluate potential nest sites, advertise their discoveries to one another, engage in open deliberation, choose a final site, and navigate together--as a swirling cloud of bees--to their new home. Seeley investigates how evolution has honed the decision-making methods of honeybees over millions of years, and he considers similarities between the ways that bee swarms and primate brains process information. He concludes that what works well for bees can also work well for people: any decision-making group should consist of individuals with shared interests and mutual respect, a leader's influence should be minimized, debate should be relied upon, diverse solutions should be sought, and the majority should be counted on for a dependable resolution.

An impressive exploration of animal behavior, *Honeybee Democracy* shows that decision-making groups, whether honeybee or human, can be smarter than even the smartest individuals in them.



**Thomas D. Seeley** is professor of biology at Cornell University and a passionate beekeeper. He is the author of *The Wisdom of the Hive* and *Honeybee Ecology* (Princeton).

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