

# THE BACK PORCH RANGER

by Melissa Kay Bishop

For over 200 million years, the world garden has been abuzz with the work of bees, busy ensuring the survival of crops and all life on earth. Today, honey bees account for 90% of the pollination required to raise the commercial crops we all depend on. In fact, honey bees are responsible for one-third of the American diet. It is time to stop taking the little buzzers for granted, as they are in trouble of disappearing altogether.

A small village in China that relies on its crop of Asian Pears has become a canary in the coal mine for what life might be like if bees were to vanish because, in this location, they have. Pear farmers now rely on hand pollination by humans to keep their livelihood going. It is a slow and

laborious process that cannot compete with the work produced by the busy bee.

Honey bees are actually not native to the U.S., but were introduced by European settlers in 1622. According to Professor Gregory Wiggins of The University of Tennessee Entomology Department, "Before European Honey bees or EHBs, most pollination was done by native bees. However, there was little large scale agriculture before colonization. Plus, the EHBs were domesticated like our modern crop plants, so EHBs have had a longer association with many crop



European Honey Bee

plants. If EHBs were to disappear, it would be hard for native bees to fill the gap."

The buzz kill of honey bees is coming from many different directions and has been given names such as Colony Collapse Disorder or CCD and Africanization. The phenomenon of CCD

has been occurring since 1945, but has seen an alarming increase since 2006. Bees are disappearing from hives and leaving no

bodies at the crime scene, making it hard to press charges against any one factor. However, scientists have been able to narrow down some suspects. They include parasites, bacteria, fungi, and pesticides. The Environmental Protection Agency as well as individual researchers have begun to find solutions.

Parasites seem to be the easiest to address as researchers have been able to isolate some culprits that attack certain colonies and have had some success in treatment. Even the White House has gotten involved by importing a strain of Russian bees to the presidential hive that is resistant to the varroa mite.

The other threat to our gentle breed of EHB is that

they are slowly being taken over by a strain of bee that is Africanized. Better known as The Killer Bee, they were originally from Africa and hybridized in South America. They have encroached upon our southwestern states and have even been spotted in Florida. Beyond the obvious problem of these bees being highly aggressive and swarming in huge numbers to attack and kill people and animals, they are taking over the gentle European colonies. Although they are still good pollinators, they are dangerous, have smaller hives, produce less honey, and the harvest is unreliable.

At this point, there are a few things that we as citizens of the earth can do to help the honey bees. One is to stop using pesticides and look to bee and earth

friendly modes of pest control. The information and options available for this are immense and cannot be addressed within the confines of an article, but rather a book and there are many out there. A simple way to help support research is through the purchases you make, like buying ice cream. Haagen-Dazs is donating money to fund research when you purchase one of their "bee built" flavors. For more information, go to [www.helpthehoneybees.com](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com).

*Melissa Kay Bishop is a journalist and wildlife hobbyist living in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. After years of volunteering and working with creatures great and small, she now chronicles the ones who visit her own yard. She can be reached at [backporchranger@gmail.com](mailto:backporchranger@gmail.com).*

**WWW.ThePeopleNews.com**  
Have a Look!

## Lucky Dog Suites & Spa



For the...

### "Discriminating Canine"

All Breeds Welcome ~ 30 Years Experienced Professionals  
Overnight Boarding \* Dayplay \* Grooming Spa \* Pet Supplies  
All Level Training \* Behavioral Consultations

The Most Luxurious Pet Hotel  
in South Eastern Tennessee

**(423) 476-8700**

<http://www.luckydogsuites.com>

5560 Georgetown Rd NW (Hwy 60) Cleveland, TN 37312  
Hopewell School Area ~ Westside of Car Wash

*Present this ad for 10% OFF Lucky dog  
professional services*

Pioneer Credit  
ompany  
"We Try to Understand."

### Trust Pioneer Credit for all your Financial Needs!

Personal Loans • Car Loans • Tax Preparation  
Unexpected Expenses

#### 5 Area Locations

East Ridge	5611 Ringgold Rd.	423-499-0086
Cleveland	95 2nd Street NE	423-479-9615
Rossville	302 McFarland Ave.	706-866-0015
Dayton	425 Main Street	423-775-3347
Athens	904 Dupitt St.	423-745-3760

Can you imagine the words **FAST, EASY, and TAXES**  
in the same sentence? **We Can!**

See Pioneer Credit for all your  
tax preparation needs. No one can get your  
tax refund faster! Call today- 479-9615

Apply by Phone or Apply Online at:

[www.pioneercredit.net](http://www.pioneercredit.net)

**Stop By or Call Us Today!**

all loans subject to our liberal credit policy and credit limitations if any.