



# Bee (Animal)

*Claire Preston*

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The bee is not a domestic animal, yet our relationship with this creature is one of the longest-standing between humanity and any other species. Since the earliest times the unique manufacturing and architectural abilities of the bee and its remarkable social organization have been regarded as miraculous. Because of this ancient relationship, bees always carry profound cultural meanings which can tell us much about who we are. Bees are also the subject of an enormous body of legend throughout the temperate world; no less extraordinary is the natural history of the bee, and the ways in which its biological and social organization have been adapted and encouraged by mankind in search of honey.

Claire Preston's *Bee* follows the natural and cultural history of our relationship with the bee and the development of these legends, from ancient political descriptions of the bee to Renaissance debates about monarchy, and the accompanying scientific discoveries about insects, to the modern conversion of the virtuous, civil bee into the dangerous swarm of the Hollywood horror flick, and finally to the melancholy recognition that the scientific study of bee behavior gives us a warning to beware our own awful technologies of destruction.

Written in a lively, engaging style, and containing many fascinating bee facts, anecdotes, fables, and images, *Bee* is also a wide-ranging, highly-illustrated meditation on the natural and cultural history of this familiar and much-admired insect. It will appeal to a wide audience: those who work with bees and in honey production; those who appreciate this industrious creature and its intricate, miniature society; and those too who have an interest in the way animals such as the bee have woven themselves into the fabric of our culture.

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