

## Real Democracy: How Honey Bees Choose a Home

Real democracy — when citizens meet in a face-to-face assembly and bind themselves under decisions they make themselves — has been practiced for some 2500 years by humans, but for more than 20 million years by honey bees. We will examine the remarkable democratic decision-making process of a honey bee swarm as it chooses a new home. We will see that bees have evolved sophisticated ways of working together to identify a dozen or more potential dwelling places, to choose the highest quality one for their new home site, and to make a decision without undue delay. We will conclude with some take-home lessons from the bees (“swarm smarts”) on how to foster good decision making by democratic groups of humans.

### Tuesday, June 17, 2008, 5:30pm

355 Jennings Hall (MBI Auditorium)

Lecture is free and open to the public

A reception with complimentary food and drink will follow



**Thomas D. Seeley, PhD**  
Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior  
Assistant Professor of Kinesiology  
Cornell University

Dr. Thomas D. Seeley is a Professor and the Chairman in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University, where he teaches courses in animal behavior and does research on the functional organization of honey bee colonies.

He began keeping and studying bees in 1969, while a high school student, when he brought home a swarm that he had collected in a hastily constructed "hive." When a college student, he worked each summer in the honey bee laboratory at Cornell University, where he learned the craft of beekeeping and began probing the inner workings of the bee colony. Thoroughly intrigued by the smooth functioning of honey bee colonies, he went on to graduate school at Harvard University where he studied under two ant men (Drs. Bert Hölldobler and Edward O. Wilson) and began his research on bees in earnest.

His research focuses on the internal organization of honey bee colonies and has been summarized in the books [The Wisdom of the Hive](#) (1995, Harvard University Press), [Honeybee Ecology](#) (1985, Princeton University Press), and [Honeybee Democracy](#) (forthcoming, in 2009).

